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ABSTRACT

This document includes eight chapters and an appendix that lists abbreviations and trade union organizations at the European Community (EC) level. Chapter 1 identifies the roles of employers, employee organizations or trade unions, and system conditions in the development of vocational training policies in the European community. Chapter 2 describes the policies of employees' organizations at the European level. Chapter 3 identifies trade union organizations at the EC level and also branch organizations. Chapter 4 presents basic guidelines for institutional participation and describes the participating institutions. Chapter 5 describes the instruments, such as regulations, directives, decisions, recommendations and options, and promotion of pilot projects and studies, of the EC. Chapter 6 provides four examples of the role of the social partners, employers and trade unions, in EC activities: (1) the European Social Fund; (2) vocational training policy in the EC during the 1980s; (3) harmonization of training; and (4) the role of the social partners in the texts of Council of Europe decisions. Chapter 7 presents developments in the construction, metalworking and electronics, banking and insurance, and agriculture sectors. Chapter 8 summarizes the present role of employees and reflects on how to increase the responsibility and influence of the social partners. (CML)

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Employees' organizations and their contribution to the development of vocational training policy in the European Community

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

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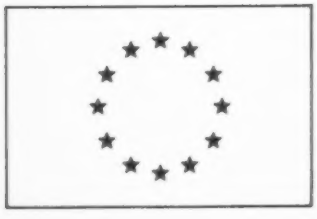

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Employees' organizations and their contribution to the development of vocational training policy in the European Community

A study commissioned by CEDEFOP within the framework of the project 'Role of the social partners in vocational training'

Prepared by
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Foreword

The European Community attributes considerable importance to promoting the social dialogue between trade unions and employers.

On the one hand, there are the many formal and informal opportunities for participation; on the other, however, those concerned and the institutions they represent are often dissatisfied with the nature of, procedure, and scope for, participation at Community level, and with the latter's influence on the Member States and their respective policies.

This would seem to apply to an area such as vocational training, too, where it is relatively easy to communicate and where EC institutions have, by comparison, relatively far-reaching statutory powers.

In addition to the investigations commissioned by CEDEFOP in the twelve EC Member States, which illustrate the participation of the social partners in vocational training at national, regional, sectoral and in-company levels, two further investigations were commissioned at EC level.

They were to examine the role of the social partners in the development of a European and/or EC vocational training policy, the responsible bodies, the initiatives and preconditions, and also the experience gained so far.

One report was to examine this subject from the standpoint of the employers' organizations (cf. report by Mr Franz Castin), and the other from the standpoint of the employees' organizations, i.e. this report.

The author of this report, Mr Horst Lemke, has, himself, worked in these bodies over a number of years and is familiar with their working methods.

Furthermore, the facts and opinions in this report are based as far as possible on discussions with employees' organizations both at EC level and in the Federal Republic of Germany, with offices of the Community and on assessments of publications. This report seeks to present as comprehensive a picture as possible of the policies and institutions of vocational training in which employees play a role. It was prepared in the second half of 1986.

Burkart Sellin
Project Coordinator

I Framework Conditions and Key Questions

1. Constituent participation of the social partners

This report does not assess whether the social partners play a role at Community level. This is already indicated in the Treaties establishing the European Communities and is not open to debate. The participation, indeed the active, co-responsible role of the social partners is a politically desired, constituent element in the European Communities.

Since the creation of the Community, its bodies have taken many decisions which aim to extend the role of the social partners, both through setting up additional committees and through extending and encouraging their activities.

The European Parliament, Council and Commission have intensified these efforts in the course of the last few years. And Article 118b which was added to the Single European Act of 28 February 1986,

"The Commission is to strive to establish a dialogue between the social partners at European level, which, if they so desire, can lead to contractual links"

also opens up further prospects for the role of the social partners in vocational training.

2. Questions to ascertain the role of the social partners

The following questions, in particular, can illustrate the role played by the social partners in vocational training at EC level:

- What influence do the social partners have vis-à-vis Community bodies?

- What duties and opportunities do Community bodies have?

- How do the social partners use the institutional and informal opportunites open to them?

- How do the social partners work together?

An attempt has been made here to find answers to these questions in various connections and from different angles.

3. System conditions determine opportunities for influence

The means and instruments, with which the social partners exert influence and are involved in the shaping of vocational training, are very much characterized by the system conditions under which vocational training is provided.

In EC Member States this means that even where goals are identical, vocational training must vary because the vocational training systems are different. Here, an

important factor comes into play, i.e. whether vocational training is more anchored in companies or in the school system.

At EC level, too, the conditions prevailing in a given system are important determining factors. On the one hand, Community recommendations and programmes are implemented by the Member States, i.e. incorporated into their existing systems; and, on the other, these recommendations and programmes are determined not only by the goals agreed on by those concerned but also, very importantly, by the responsibilities and rights of EC institutions[1].

So, if we want to determine the role which the social partners should play in Community vocational training tasks and how they tackle this role, then Community tasks and opportunities have to be borne in mind.

3.1 Vocational training is not solely a public task

In EC Member States, vocational training is far less a public task than other areas of education.

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1 This is also illustrated by the fact that decisions of the Ministers for Labour and Social Affairs are regularly preceded by consultations with the Economic and Social Committee and the Advisory Commitee on Vocational Training, whereas those of the Ministers for Education, who have no constituent body and who reach agreement "within the Council", are not.

This is the reason why the social partners wield, on the whole, more influence here than in purely state school or institutional systems, for example. It is also the reason why employers have more real influence which, in turn, is of importance when evaluating their actual role in vocational training.

3.2 The influence of the social partners derives from many sources

The real influence of the social partners on vocational training is due to several factors and not just to their involvement in the implementation of training or through special regulations concerning their role.

Here, their tasks and their interests as representatives of the trainees (employees) and the employers of these former trainees are an important factor. They have, to a certain extent, priority over the established rights in vocational training and are independent of these.

Here, it is important to bear in mind that these circumstances and rights which are determining factors at national level only exist to a limited degree at Community level. For, at that level there is no implementation of vocational training but - figuratively speaking - only duties of governments and public authorities.

3.3 Special links of the social partners with vocational training

The links of the social partners in the terms of this study or in the terms of the general principles on vocational training of the European Community of 1963 differ from their links with general and higher education.

From the standpoints of employers and employees they are in some cases identical and in others very different. Whereas the employers are mostly interested in the vocational qualifications of the rising generation, the trade unions also represent the interests of all workers whose training, after all, is what it is all about!

The very fact that there are still considerable differences of opinion concerning the goal of training for all and the scale of such training in many Member States reveals that the social partners adopt differing attitudes to vocational training.

4. Role of the social partners is not restricted to links with the Council and the Commission

The role of the social partners in vocational training at Community level is not restricted to their links with EC bodies and other international and supranational institutions.

Thus, the Community is increasingly of the opinion that the social partners at European level play an important role in their links with each other also (Social Dialogue). In vocational training at EC level to date, the dialogue has mainly taken place between the social partners on the one hand and Community bodies and offices on the other.

But, in principle the social partners can implement, or at least work towards implementing their "European" goals in the Member States, i.e. in vocational training practice, using their "own" resources, as well.

And last but not least, the bodies and offices of the Community can use the influence of the social partners to implement Community goals in the Member States.

5. Formal opportunities greater than actual influence

At European level more than in the Member States it can be said that favourable, institutional opportunities for the participation of the Member States and corresponding framework conditions in "European Law" do not ensure that the employees and their representatives can wield great influence. Their real opportunities are also restricted by:

- other problems and duties which have priority for the trade unions;

- insufficient staffing and inadequate financial and material resources[2];

- the fact that the experts they commandeer are very rarely released by their companies for this purpose.

6. The role of the social partners is also a Community responsibility

We must not only examine the opportunities open to the social partners at Community level and the extent to which they make use of them. In order to evaluate their actual role, we must also examine how the Council and Commission react to the social partners; what do they do to help the social partners assume a more influential and responsible role in vocational training?

And these questions must not be limited to the formal procedures.

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2 This shortage is aggravated by the fact that even in the case of priority Commission decisions on the use of its services (rooms, interpreters, typists) vocational training must often give way.

II Policies of Employees' Organizations at European Level

1. The positions of the European trade unions

1.1 Differences and similarities in initial positions

Although the trade unions have been involved in the policies and activities of the European Communities since their foundation, they were very slow to adopt a common stance on vocational training.

As far as possible, the trade union representatives in the various European bodies are moving in that direction. However, as there are still considerable differences not only in the national systems and structures of vocational training but also in their stages of development, it is very difficult for them always to adopt unanimous positions. The differences "in reality" frequently determine to a greater degree the position of employees' representatives when it comes to concrete measures, for example the allocation of the resources of the Social Fund or demonstration projects.

However, it is possible to discern to an increasing extent a common stance not only on "fundamental issues" but also on important individual issues.

On the other hand, the trade unions are in the same position as government representatives. They must take care to ensure that on the road to a "European vocational

training policy", they do not introduce elements which they are seeking to overcome in their own countries.

1.2 On the road to common policies

The development of common attitudes and policies amongst employees' organizations springs from two main sources:

- from the European amalgamations of national trade unions, in particular ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation);
- and, to an even greater extent, from the need to adopt a stance vis-à-vis the activities of international institutions.

In other words, the trade unions could not enjoy the support of long-established decisions and programmes in their policies vis-à-vis the European Communities; they had far more to develop these parallel to the development of the Community itself, in most cases as a reaction to proposals and considerations of the Commission and its offices.

1.3 The positions of ETUC

The various European trade union associations and congresses of national trade union confederations have, since the foundation of the European Communities, delivered opinions on education and training issues and submitted demands.

However, it is only in recent years that they have developed joint ideas and programmes on topical issues, too.

An important step in this direction was the "ETUC Education and Training Programme"[3] which was approved by its Executive Committee on 8-9 October 1981.

1.3.1 Common principles

A glance at the programme very quickly reveals that, in line with the actual situation in vocational training at Community level, it is not directed exclusively or primarily at European bodies and institutions, i.e. it is not primarily a programme or a manual for trade union members in the relevant European bodies but that it contains common principles which are to be applied for the most part in the individual countries.

Consequently, figures 62 and 63 of this programme state,

"As is customary, the interlocutors of the trade union will be at both European and national level, and indeed even at regional level. At the national level, each of our affiliated organizations will select the ways and means it thinks most fit for carrying out its action. At the European level, the ETUC working party on education will propose a strategy for action to the ETUC Executive

---

3 ETUC publication, Brussels, no date

Committee on individual points, depending on the interlocutor involved and on the demand which is to be put forward.

The ETUC working party on education and training requests the Executive Committee to extend its mission by authorizing the employment of every means to achieve the objective set out in this programme."

The ETUC Report on Activities for 1982-1984 contains no details of the further activities of the working party on education and training.

All the same, the ETUC colloquium in Brussels from 21 to 23 May 1984 on "Education, Training and Employment in Western Europe" and the ensuing "Memorandum on Current Education and Vocational Training Policy in Western Europe" which was adopted by the ETUC Executive Committee on 14-15 June 1984, do constitute a clear continuation of the work already underway.

With the 1981 programme and the 1984 memorandum, ETUC and its member trade unions now have an extensive and, at the same time, clear guide for the role of employees' representatives in vocational training. Summarized under the following headings, the main positions are as follows:

- 10 years compulsory general education
  "School attendance must be compulsory for all children until at least 16 years of age; this compulsory

education must be provided free of charge and on an all-day basis for all children within the framework of the comprehensive school. The actual duration of compulsory education depends on the education system."

- Comprehensive educational task of vocational training
  "Vocational training, in addition to the simple teaching of subject-specific qualifications, should develop in young people a critical mind and a sense of commitment towards the society in which they live."

- Equal access to continuing training
  "Vocational training courses must not end in an educational cul-de-sac but must provide the same entitlements to continuing and university education as are available to the pupils of schools offering general education."

- Public responsibility and codetermination
  "The qualification interests of workers and their families must be taken adequately into account in an integrated, publicly-controlled initial and continuing training system under state responsibility. In addition to employers and the state, the trade unions must also be represented in vocational training on an equal footing."

- Same rights and opportunities for women
  "Traditional training systems which favour men must be changed and women must be given special support to

enable them to begin and persevere with training in new skills or abilities. The European Institutions should set an example by implementing "positive action" in order to encourage women to take up occupations other than those traditionally held by women."

- Training opportunities for everyone

"An essential issue for all the young people concerned is still the demand that the state and industry should make a sufficient number of training places available, as far as possible, also with the prospect of employment."

"At the end of their compulsory schooling all young people must be guaranteed the continuation of their education (be it vocational or general) or a job which corresponds to the training they have received."[4]

- Recognition of vocational training certificates

"Efforts must be stepped up to obtain the recognition of vocational training certificates at least in the EC. As a first step, the Commission's proposal on the comparability of vocational training certificates, which has been under discussion by the Council for months and which has already been approved by the

---

4 Here, it is revealed that not all trade union conferations are in favour of young people always giving preference to training, even when they can find work without any prior training.

Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, must be adopted and implemented without delay."[5]

- Right to continuing training

"Access to continuing training measures must be open to every worker. Participation in continuing training courses must in principle be free of charge. Special measures must be taken to promote disadvantaged groups such as the long-term unemployed, shift workers and the handicapped.

The trade unions are demanding that the right to continuing training be laid down in collective agreements and legislation. In particular, the individual's right to free choice and to time off work with pay for the purpose of continuing training must be guaranteed by law. Every worker must be granted the right to time off work with pay and with social benefits, in particular health insurance and old-age pension coverage.

Appropriate instruments must be created for financing further education. For instance, a special 'Education Fund' should be set up into which primarily the state and also employers would pay a specific percentage of the total wage bill. The trade unions must be effectively involved in the control of that Fund."

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5 This happened some four years later (cf. p. 120).

In the ETUC Education and Training Programme of October 1981, it is stated that the importance attached to these demands varies from one country to another; in some countries they have only been partially met, in others 100%.

However, this certainly does not apply to the above-mentioned key demands. Even the EC Member States with the most highly developed education and training systems - in structural and quantitative terms - are still far removed from the situation described in the trade union demands and principles.

1.3.2 Demands and ideas for the EC level

The demands and ideas on the reform and further development of national education and training systems are, of course, also guidelines for the attitudes to be adopted by the trade unions in the various EC bodies.

In addition, ETUC resolutions also contain special statements on education and training policy at EC level. They call, among other things, for:

- an urgent decision to be taken by the bodies of the European Community to promote continuing training;

- the real involvement of trade unions in Community measures concerning the new technologies:

  - . in the planned network of pilot projects and
  - . in the exchange programme amongst the Member States for individuals responsible for training in new technologies;

- the recognition of vocational training certificates at least at EC level (cf. also VI/3);

- increased trade union involvement in the EC programme on "measures to improve the preparation of young people for employment and to ease their transition from school to working life".

"Trade union participation in the first EC transition programme for the 1978-1982 period proved inadequate; this should be improved in the second transition programme for the 1983-1987 period by increasing trade union involvement. Even if all these pilot projects only reach a fraction of the persons concerned, there is still a chance that they will pave the way for an improved policy for preparing young people for adult life."

1.4 Trade unions and joint committees

ETUC is in favour of developing sectoral, political strategies at Community level. It sees the creation of joint committees at sectoral level to assume responsibility not only in the social but also in the economic and

industrial areas, as an essential instrument for the development of political strategies of this kind.

ECF-IUF very much regrets that in recent years the Commission has made very little attempt to set up joint committees in the food industry.

In its resolution of 21-22 November 1985, EFBW calls for the "creation of an official framework for industrial links at European level through the creation of an industrial committee for building and woodworkers as a point of reference for the dialogue and consultations in connection with existing problems and how to tackle them".

In spite of these comments, it still appears questionable whether all the trade union committees attribute much importance to such joint committees. It also appears questionable whether, in the light of their activities to date, they can be an effective instrument for vocational training.

1.5 The policy of trade union committees

The trade union committees have not (yet) formulated similarly extensive, systematic and programmatic positions on vocational training. If they have voiced any opinion at all on vocational training, then this usually tallies to a large degree with the positions of ETUC. At European level, there is also less cause than at national level for divergent positions between the individual trade unions and

trade union confederations or amongst the trade unions themselves.

Furthermore, the trade union committees have elaborated some demands in special areas or based their demands on sectoral peculiarities. They are presented in detail in the description of the trade union committees in Section III.

An important role could be played by the position adopted on common policies with the European employers' organizations. Here, again the picture reflects national experience. It is true that the large organizations in general set the course; only if they are successful are there increased chances of transferring what has been achieved to other sectors. All the same, astounding developments have been achieved in a few, relatively small areas, and in isolated cases some bodies have been set up jointly with employers.

2. The various areas of policy

One thing is clear: on the whole neither for Community bodies nor for the social partners does vocational training play a dominant role. Both in their statements and programmes and in their utilization of funds and staff, it is clear that economic and social policy have absolute priority.

In organizational and strategic terms, the activities of the trade unions at European level are concentrated above all on efforts to influence the opinions of the Commission and Council. In these respects, they are similar to the employers as both sides are interested in wielding influence and extending that influence institutionally.

The common interest in wielding influence has not, however, led to hardly any combined action with the employers to establish a common vocational training policy in EC Member States with the means available to the social partners, such as collective agreements, self-administration bodies, foundations or similar insitutions of both sides to promote vocational training.

Nor does it mean that the social partners agree when it comes to the question of how and, more particularly, to what extent the Community should influence vocational training.

3. Kinds of influence

There follows a summarized overview of the ways and means used by employees' organizations to influence the bodies of the Commission and its offices. To this end, initiatives can be taken both by the social partners and by Community institutions.

3.1 General exchange of experience

What is meant by general exchange of experience as a means of exerting influence is in particular the informal but still quite regular discussions between the representatives of Community bodies and the European trade union organizations.

These discussions are held at various levels of the hierarchies of both sides. These are not negotiations but rather the mutual presentation of standpoints on topical and fundamental issues. These include:

3.1.1 Top level discussions

Top level meetings between the Commission and the social partners normally take place twice yearly. The main aim is for them to familiarize themselves with each other's standpoint on the items on the agenda.

On the trade union side, the Chairman and General Secretary of ETUC and the chairmen of the national trade union confederations attend these top level discussions. The Commission is represented by the commissioners responsible for the topics to be discussed and their chief officers, often by the President of the Commission.

Vocational training has not played an important role in the subjects dealt with in recent years. It was, however, often a component in other subjects. Thus, at the last top

level talks in November 1986, where ETUC submitted its proposal for a European Social Programme, this had a very strong vocational training element.

Top level talks are also held between the European trade union committees and the responsible commissioners of the European Community.

3.1.2 Regular consultative meetings

These meetings offer an opportunity to get to know the other side's position on general and special issues in an informal setting, not for example on committees.

The preliminary consultations are of particular importance here.

3.1.3 Technical discussions

Talks are also held at irregular intervals between the secretariats of ETUC, the secretariats of the sectoral committees and the responsible work units and/or staff members of the Commission on in-depth subjects. These discussions are conducted independently of the special meetings of the bodies and councils.

3.2 Briefing the Commission

The Commission and its offices are informed of all important opinions and press statements of the European trade union organizations. They are even frequently sent the minutes of executive committee meetings.

This information is collected and evaluated by the "Office of the Social Partners" which then passes it on to the individual offices, the responsible chefs de cabinet and the directors-general. These offices and individuals are often informed directly by the trade unions.

One would, however, be justified in thinking that the general demands and programmes of the trade unions are of little relevance for the concrete measures of EC. It would appear that they are too comprehensive and on most points go far beyond what the organs and offices want and are able to do.

3.3 Opinions on individual projects and problems

Independent of the opinions of employees' representatives in the various consultative organs of the Council and Commission, ETUC and the trade unions committees also express an opinion on individual projects and issues. These opinions may be expressed in written form or exchanged during direct personal contacts.

With opinions of this kind, the social partners can express their attitudes more clearly than is often possible in the joint committees where there is a constant need for compromise.

3.4 Committee involvement

In the consultative committees of the Council and the Commission, the European trade union organizations have two ways of exerting their influence. On the one hand, many of their members are themselves members of such committees and can influence the formation of opinions directly.

On the other, and this is the more important aspect, it is intended that they support and coordinate the work of the employees' representatives in these committees in order to achieve greater effectiveness. For, the fact that the trade unions at European level have in the meantime elaborated common positions on many key issues does not necessarily mean that their representatives (the employees' side) express unanimous views in the various committees.

III Organization of Employees' Interests

1. Democracies need cooperation

1.1 The constant need for harmonization

Every government - and by extension the Council and the Commission of the European Communities and its offices - needs to inform itself on how its projects are seen by those concerned and by their representatives, on the effects and on what is needed to implement them.

This is the recipe for success even if it is not pursued in all cases and even if there are, as there must be, exceptions. Those offices of the Commission which prepare political decisions and programmes are, therefore, "naturally" forced to go to the social partners to be informed and to inform.

1.2 Good organization of interests increases influence

The better the social partners prepare themselves for this dialogue, the easier it is for them to meet the information needs of the public authorities, and the greater their chances, not only of presenting their ideas in the discussions, but also of having them incorporated into decisions and programmes.

The social partners also play an important role even if they, themselves, do not go to the governments or in this case to the Council or the Commission.

Experience has shown not only in the national context but also at EC level that government representatives or the offices of the Council and the Commission meet with employers' and employees' representatives (and representatives of other groups, too) in order to exchange opinions on an informal basis about intended measures before the official decision-making and consultation processes begin.

This does not always apply to all activities. The intensity and frequency of such activities depend to a considerable extent on the people involved. As a rule, however, the offices of the Commission do not present any proposals for joint action or other vocational training programmes without having first informed at least the most important offices and contacts - from their standpoint - of their intentions and obtaining their first reactions.

Beyond this exchange of opinions which is oriented towards individual projects, there are also more or less regular contacts between those persons in the offices of the Commission and the Council on the one hand and of the organizations on the other who have to work together on a formal basis. These contacts are determined by the people involved.

These unofficial exchanges of opinion mean that the offices of the Commission would not introduce any proposals into the regular procedures if they were of the opinion that they could fail because of the resistance from one group of the social partners or if they felt such proposals could only be implemented against that group's will.

On the other hand, this means that the social partners do have an opportunity to introduce their proposals and ideas into the considerations of the offices of the Commission, frequently without this being subject to the pressure of the moment.

2. Trade union organizations at EC level

Trade union organizations are normally structured in such a way that they can represent the interests of employees vis-à-vis employers' organizations and state institutions in an organization-oriented and effective manner. The organizational structure of trade union confederations at European level also corresponds to this organizational principal at national and regional levels, i.e. on the one hand confederations representing a specific economic sector aiming in particular to defend and implement interests in that sector, interests which can best be implemented there, and on the other suprasectoral organizations to defend the common interests of all workers.

Trade union confederations at European level have two main objectives:

- the development of common aims/demands which are to be implemented through trade union demands in the Member States;

- the coordination of activities vis-à-vis the organs and offices of the European Community.

Some of the organizations described in this section pursue both objectives. Others, for example, the Coal and Steel Committee limits itself to coordinating activities vis-à-vis the Community. However, in practice it is not possible to distinguish clearly between the representation of interests nor is it possible to draw such a distinction between the individual trade unions and the trade union confederations. The activities of the individual trade union organizations and the interests of their members often overlap. The "technical trade unions", too, represent the general interests of their members and the umbrella organizations also adopt a stance on technical matters.

The more extensive the area of responsibility of the state or suprastate authorities and governments, the more general as a rule the character of their decisions and measures. As the Community offices, at least those responsible for vocational training, tend to have tasks of a more general character, the general associations of the social partners, too, are called on in particular. ETUC is, therefore, the most important "natural" partner of EC institutions. And its creation was indeed a reaction to this situation.

2.1 Suprasectoral organizations

2.1.1. European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

ETUC is an association of 34 national trade union confederations, not of individual trade unions, from 20 Western European countries.

In 1973 it took over from the European Confederation of Free Trade Unions which had been set up in 1968 in the Community.

All Member States of the EC and of EFTA (European Free Trade Association) are represented in ETUC by national trade union confederations. ETUC has its headquarters in Brussels. At present, the ETUC secretariat consists of a general secretary, a deputy general secretary, four political secretaries and around twenty further members of staff.

ETUC committees and working groups

At the present time, ETUC has eleven standing committees and four ad-hoc working groups which are responsible for the preparation as well as the implementation of its policies[6]. One of these standing committees is responsible for young people in the trade union movement. It also has a working group for education and vocational training. But

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6 Report on Activities 1982-1984, Brussels, no date

this group has not been institutionalized to the same extent as the others.

Now this does not mean that ETUC regards education and training issues as unimportant or does not provide for strong representation in these fields. This cannot be the case, anyway, as they are components of other policies, too.

But it does stress the well-known fact that trade unions normally have to give priority to other problems regarding their use of both staff and finances and their concrete activities.

2.1.1.1 Inter-regional trade union confederations

In several regions special forms of collaboration and contact have been developed which have led to the creation of the following inter-regional trade union councils[7]:

- Saarland / Lorraine / Luxembourg
- Liège / Aachen / Maastricht
- North Netherlands / Weser Ems
- South Baden / Basel / Upper Rhine
- Rhine / Ijssel / Ems
- Nord-Pas-de-Calais / Hainaut-West Flanders
- Eastern Pyrénées / Western Mediterranean.

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7 Report on Activities 1982-1984, Brussels, no date

Vocational training issues, in particular those concerning young and female employees, make up the main areas of work of these inter-regional trade union confederations. They have also drawn up proposals on how to set up useful cross-frontier vocational training centres and on how to make use of existing centres. In the meantime, such proposals have been implemented in the North Netherlands and in Weser Ems.

Some of these councils also have working groups for vocational training issues.

The inter-regional trade union confederations are looked after by ETUC.

2.1.1.2 European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)

ETUI with its headquarters in Brussels was set up in 1978 on the initiative of the European Trade Union Confederation in order to examine European aspects of economic, social and political development. It is an instrument of the European trade union movement for information/documentation and educational activities.

This Institute receives an annual subsidy to cover its activities which is entered in the budget of the Community. The basis for this subsidy is a Council decision on a social programme of action dating from January 1974.

ETUI can be regarded as a scientifically-oriented service organization for the European trade union organizations and for the representatives of employees in EC bodies. It aims to give active support to European and non-European trade union bodies in the preparation of opinions and, more specifically, to support ETUC in its numerous committees, working groups, consultative conferences and hearings[8]. Its publications are also directly available to the responsible offices of the Council and the Commision.

To date, ETUI has not yet looked directly at vocational training issues. Nevertheless, vocational training does play a major role in many of its activities and in many different connections for example in the projects on "jobs for young people" and "flexibility in work places".

2.1.2 Trade Union Advisory Committee to OECD

When setting up OECD, its Council of Ministers decided in favour of permanent consultations with those international non-governmental organizations which were most representative of the very varied sectors of industry. In line with this decision, OECD officially recognized BIAC (Business and Industry Advisory Committee to OECD) and TUAC (Trade Union Advisory Committee to OECD) as the representatives of industry and commerce i.e. of organized labour.

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8 German Trade Unions' Federation - GTUF Report on Activities 1978-1981, Düsseldorf, 1981

The Trade Union Advisory Committee represents forty trade union confederations from OECD countries. In the beginning it included only ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) trade unions but since 1970 Christian trade union confederations have also become members.

The activities of TUAC are financed by the member organizations. Material support (conference rooms, interpreters in official languages, travel costs) is only provided to a very limited and dwindling degree by OECD.

The effectiveness of the influence of BIAC and TUAC can, of course, only be asessed against the background of OECD activities in, and opportunities for vocational training. In the fields of social affairs, labour and education, OECD is purely a "high-level forum where government officials consult on key issues"[9].

In 1986, BIAC and TUAC presented a very impressive joint statement on "Full Employment and Growth as the Economic and Social Goal"[10]. Their comments on vocational training were as follows

"It is absolutely essential to extend education, training and retraining facilities for the working population."

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9 Pamphlet "OECD at a glance", Paris, no date
10 Jointly presented pamphlet, Paris, April 1986

And they continue

"23. Retraining facilitates adaptability. Education, training and retraining must be a continuous process to avoid bottlenecks and mismatches in ways that are acceptable both to the society and to the individual.

24. The social partners have a common cause to inform those responsible for education, training and retraining about the current needs of the labour market. The long time now required to adjust education and training to changes in the labour market is the cause for much unnecessary unemployment among young people with many years of education above compulsory requirements.

25. Facilitating the transition from school to working life is a way to reduce unemployment among young people. In many cases, built-in vocational training in business enterprises can smooth this transition.

26. Programmes and policies to support the unemployed should include incentives to adaptability. Particular attention should be paid to the promotion of occupational mobility. Policies to increase internal adaptation in business enterprises may be negotiated, and this can compensate at least in part for low external mobility."

TUAC has adopted a stance on almost all the important activities of OECD in education and vocational training[11]. The key statements in these opinions can be summarized as follows:

- Education, training and retraining must be seen as a continuous process and must be shaped in such a way that they enable working individuals to adjust to changing conditions in their working life and to grasp any new opportunities which may come their way.

- The importance of overall education, training and retraining means that neither the government nor employers should bear sole responsibility for these areas. What we need are combined efforts by government, employers and trade unions. The trade unions must be involved to a greater degree in the planning and implementation of vocational training.

- The education systems must be adjusted and developed. An alarmingly large number of school leavers could be termed "functional illiterates".

- Increased access to training and continuing training is one factor which could help to avoid polarization.

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11 Source: Various opinions on OECD meetings and activities in the 1984-1986 period, Paris

This report examines the role of the social partners in the EC. As far as the following two important questions are concerned

- whether there is intensive cooperation between TUAC and ETUC and with other trade union confederations at EC level, and

- whether the European trade unions within TUAC pursue a coordinated policy and procedures vis-à-vis the OECD,

the following can be said. There are good contacts between the secretariats of ETUC and TUAC. The responsible secretariats are invited to each other's events and discussions on vocational training issues. TUAC does not, however, have a "European Policy". And this would not be in line with its task.

3. Trade union committees - branch organizations

Whereas ETUC is an association of general national trade union confederations, the trade union committees have a technical and economic orientation. They are associations or joint institutions of national trade unions at European level.

At present eleven trade union committees have been recognized by ETUC[12].

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12 ETUC Report on Activities 1982-1984, Brussels, no date

There follows a brief description of these committees with particular emphasis on the question whether and, if yes, what role they play with regard to vocational training.

3.1 European Metalworkers' Federation in the Community (EMF)

EMF is made up of metalworking trade unions from the Member States of the European Communities and from Sweden, Norway and Finland.

The aim of this federation is to represent the economic, social and cultural interests of workers in the metal industry at all levels of the Community. It directs its activities towards concrete joint programmes of action and it is striving to achieve joint action by all metalworking trade unions in the Community[13].

Within the framework of its resolutions, in particular on economic and labour market policy, EMF has also voiced an opinion on vocational training. One example is its general resolution adopted at its fifth general assembly in Naples on 2 and 3 June 1983. In the field of labour market policy EMF demanded in this resolution:

- that male and female workers be guaranteed access to education and training throughout their working life and that special attention be paid to the specific

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13 EMF statutes

needs of groups such as young people, women, migrant workers and the handicapped;

- education and training budgets be increased considerably and that the quality of education and continuing training be regarded as a permanent issue, and trade unions be guaranteed participation.

To date, EMF has not developed its own vocational training policy. A first step in this direction was perhaps the setting up of a working group for vocational training in 1985 which will make a point of meeting once a year in future.

At its first meeting, this working group looked at the activities of the Commission and CEDEFOP. The members of the working group were generally of the opinion that the work carried out by the Commission and CEDEFOP was too general or horizontal and did not devote enough attention to concrete sectoral problems. They expressed the wish for this situation to be remedied and for there to be greater transparency in the work of these institutions. At its second meeting, too, the work of CEDEFOP was a major topic of discussion. First preliminary decisions were also taken about the further activities of EMF whereby continuing vocational training was identified as a priority area.

3.2 European Federation of Agricultural Workers' Unions Within the Community (EFA)

At present (October 1986) EFA is made up of agricultural trade unions from ten Member States of the European Community.

The aim of EFA is to coordinate the activities of its member trade unions and to represent their common interests in the fields of economic and social policy vis-à-vis EC institutions and other associations and institutions which exist at Community level[14].

EFA has on several occasions delivered an opinion on general and agricultural issues to EC bodies and has on these occasions submitted demands and proposals for improved vocational training.

One example of this could be the resolutions adopted at its Tenth Congress from 16 to 18 October 1985

"EFA stresses the need for broad basic training for workers in agriculture and for the continuous adaptation of training and further training. It will, therefore, based among other things on the 'Efficiency Regulation" (EEC) 797/85, elaborate concrete proposals for:

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14 EFA statutes

a) the direct examination of possible research findings which could improve working conditions in initial and further training practice;

b) providing opportunities for continuing training and, where necessary, for retraining, and

c) the recognition of equivalent vocational training and continuing training certificates throughout the EC,

and will forward these proposals to the competent EC bodies."

And in an opinion on forestry, EFA believes

"Training is necessary not only in order to improve the quality of production and knowledge of the environment and woodlands, but also in order to equip people with improved knowledge of new technologies (microelectronics and biotechnology). These technologies are of considerable importance for the development of a modern and competitive forestry industry."

3.3 European Regional Organization of the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, Professional and Technical Employees (EURO-FIET)

The European Regional Organization of the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, Professional and Technical Employees (EURO-FIET) is an association of

seventy-nine trade unions and trade union confederations of employees in the fields of banking, insurance, industry and commerce from twenty-four European countries.

This organization has its headquarters in Geneva. It also has an office in Brussels which maintains contacts mainly with the organs and offices of the European Community, with other European organizations and with the European Trade Union Confederation.

It does not have any specific vocational training activities vis-à-vis the European Community or the European employers' organizations (as yet). All the same, vocational training matters often play an important role in the activities of the Youth Committee and the sections responsible for banking, insurance, industry and commerce.

3.4 Postal, Telegraph and Telephone International - European Committee (IPTT)

The headquarters of this European committee are in Geneva. To date it has not had any permanent contact address in Brussels.

In the rather sporadic EC activities of IPTT to date, vocational training has scarcely played a role at all. Nor does it have any particular bodies or programmes for this problem area.

3.5 Coal and Steel Committee

Unlike the other trade union committees, the Coal and Steel Committee (liaison office of the free miners' and metal-workers' trade unions in the Community) is not a European trade union confederation with its own statutes and programmes it is merely a liaison office. Nor does it approve or publish any annual reports or resolutions. Its task is far more to coordinate the viewpoints of the free miners' and steelworkers' trade unions in the Community on questions of coal and steel policy and the activities of the employees' representatives in the ECSC field.

Its powers and tasks, its activities and initiatives are based on the ECSC treaty with its two industrial areas - coal and steel.

As far as vocational training is concerned, the Coal and Steel Committee has not pursued any specific activities in this field. However, its liaison office and the employees' representatives in its care has/have adopted a stance in connection with the coal and steel policy and also on issues of vocational training in the Community. Therefore, in its opinion the social back-up measures to restructuring in the iron and steel industries should also ensure that

"the existing initial and continuing training facilities are fully exploited in the future also, and that

retraining measures should not entail any loss of income for participants"[15].

3.6. European Committee of Food, Catering and Allied Workers' Unions within IUF (ECF-IUF)

ECF-IUF is a regional organization in the International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Unions. It is the product of the merger of EC-NGG and EURO IUA.

ECF has a secretariat in Brussels. It represents the economic, social and cultural interests of its member organizations and their members from the food and luxury foods industry, the hotel and catering trade and from the tobacco industry at European level[16].

Joint trade union policy should be also be promoted through active participation in shaping the policy and demands of ETUC, for example by setting up joint committees (employee/ employer) at sectoral level or through the adoption of EC directives for the protection of employees.

Amongst the strategies ECF wishes to adopt in order to solve the problems which arise in its sectors are

"support for the demands for equal opportunities for female workers in their working environment and in society, i.e.

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15 Horst Ball, Speech at the Second Steel Congress of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, May 1985
16 ECF-IUF Basic Programme

an employment and training policy which ensures that both sexes have access to all professions under the same conditions and for the same wages"[17].

So far ECF-IUF has not undertaken any special activities in the field of vocational training.

3.7 Trade Union Transport Committee in the European Community

This committee was established in 1979 by a decision of the transport trade unions of EC Member States. Its task is

"to represent the interests of employees in the transport sector vis-à-vis European institutions and to present their demands"[18].

The Transport Committee is more a coordinating body for the trade unions which belong to this area, i.e. a kind of liaison bureau rather than a trade union confederation. It does not develop any programmes or prepare any basic decisions.

Nor are there any special internal trade union organs for vocational training issues. Nevertheless, vocational training does play a very important role in its activities.

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17 ECF-IUF Basic Programme
18 Rules of the Transport Committee

On the one hand, it is very important for employees in the field of railways (new technologies in high-speed trains), inland water transport (registration regulations), deep-sea fishing (exchange of experience) and air transport (recognition of licences in civil air transport). Furthermore, the Transport Committee's sphere of responsibilities takes in more joint committees than any other ETUC trade union committee.

3.8 European Teachers' Trade Union Committee (ETTUC)

ETTUC has been a recognized trade union committee of ETUC since 1981. It is made up of teacher associations from European countries.

Its objectives include the representation of the interests of its members and of the teaching profession vis-à-vis the European Community and the Council of Europe, and collaboration with the European Trade Union Confederation.

It is obvious that ETTUC has more dealings with education and training than any other trade union committee. Unlike the other trade union committees, ETTUC has no equivalent employer organization to partner it in discussions of problems of common interest, or even in the creation of joint committees.

Nor does it have any direct influence on membership in those permanent advisory bodies of the EC. It exercises its influence through ETUC with which it works closely and

rewardingly, especially on vocational training issues.

In addition to collaborating with the Directorates-General V and X of the Commission, its activities are directed mainly at the Council of Ministers for Education. It holds regular talks with the chairman as it does with the Education Committee of the European Parliament. ETTUC is entitled to attend all the meetings of this Education Committee.

3.9 European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBW)

All national associations which represent employers from the building and woodworking industries can become members of EFBW. These associations must, however, be members of a national trade union confederation which is itself represented within the European Trade Union Confederation[19].

The objectives and initiatives of EFBW include

"the protection of building and woodworkers and improved safety for these workers by promoting corresponding activities on the labour market and in the fields of vocational training and safety and security at the workplace".

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19 EFBW statutes

Vocational training issues are an important part of EFBW's work. Despite this fact, EFBW neither has specific vocational training bodies nor vocational training programmes. The general assembly did, however, note in its resolution of 17-18 May 1983 that

"EFBW recognizes the work which has been carried out in this area by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP). It calls on the EC Commission and all Member States to strengthen their vocational training policies and, more particularly, to adapt this policy more to the needs of young people in order to ease their entry into the building industry.

EFBW also requests the Member States and employers' organizations to develop an educational policy under which young people could, in a continuous process, acquire the relevant technical qualifications in their vocational training. This policy should also aim to ensure that vocational training becomes less dependent on economic fluctuations".

This congress also called on the EC and its Member States to implement an industrial programme of action for the building industry. This programme should concentrate especially on opportunities for vocational training, a certain degree of codetermination in the division of labour, reductions in working hours and mobility.

3.10 European Committee of Trade Unions in Textiles, Clothing and Leather (GATBL)

GATBL was established in 1975 by a decision of the trade unions which are members of the International Textile, Clothing and Leather Workers Association or the World Association of Labour. As yet it has not been recognized by ETUC although it works very closely with this organization. Its task is to represent effectively the social, economic and cultural interests of workers from the textile, clothing and leather industries at European level[20].

In its basic statement of December 1984, the committee noted that

"The professional mobility of workers, their obligation to adjust to the new industrial structures, to new technologies and to new machines demand corresponding training and a quasi permanent process of continuing training. For that reason, the instruments needed for education and retraining must be set up. They are to be financed by industry and by public authorities but are to be administered jointly by public authorities, employers and the trade unions."

So far GATBL has not developed any special activities in the field of vocational training.

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20 Rules of GATBL

3.11 Further trade union committees

Up to the time this report went to print, no information could be obtained on the activities of the European Public Services Industry Committee (PSI).

The fact that nothing is known in general about this organization is an indication that it does not have any special organizational regulations and is not particularly active in this field.

Given the interests of its members, the European Committee of Trade Unions in Arts, Mass Media and Entertainment (EGAKU) is not really interested in vocational training issues in the sense of this investigation. It does not, therefore, have any special activities in this field.

IV Institutional Participation of the Social Partners

1. Basic guidelines for institutional participation

1.1 Fundamental idea anchored in the Treaties establishing the European Communities

The active, co-responsible role of the social partners is also, or even in vocational training in particular, a politically intended constituent element of the European Communities.

In the "establishing treaties", explicit mention is made of the participation of the social partners in Community economic and social policy. This is, however, limited to the delivering of opinions and advisory rights.

1.2 Joint bodies envisaged in the "establishing treaties"

The main cornerstones of the opportunities for participation by the social partners are the institutionalized consultative bodies vis-à-vis the Council and the Commission of the European Community.

For this purpose, the "establishing treaties" stipulate the creation of the "Consultative Committee of the European Coal and Steel Community" and the "Economic and Social Committee of the European Communities" (EEC, EURATOM).

They also contain the fundamental principles for the creation of further advisory committees.

1.3 Bodies which have been established in "European practice"

Most of the existing advisory councils involving the social partners were established at a later date by a decision of the European Council, the Council of the Communities or of the Commission. In almost all cases the initiative came from the trade unions.

1.4 Common aspects and special features

The committees described below share many common features, although there are considerable differences at the same time which also determine the influence of the social partners.

One of the main common features is that the groups of the social partners (employers and employees) are equally represented and as a rule account for one-third or one-quarter of the seats/votes, respectively. An exception here are the joint or mixed committees which are made up to 50% by employees' representatives and to 50% by employers' representatives.

Another feature common to these committees is that they are purely advisory[21], whereas the implementation of their opinions in the form of decisions, programmes and practical activities is the responsibility of the "European Authorities".

The differences - in as far as they are of relevance to the role of the social partners - can best be described as follows:

- Committees which can "only" act vis-à-vis the Commission. They have, of course, less influence than those which also act vis-à-vis the Council or Parliament.

- Committees which can only become active "at the request" of EC bodies can achieve less as a rule than those which can act on their own initiative.

- Committees which have their own service (secretariat) which is independent of the offices of the Commission or the Council can, at least in principle, develop more independence and activities than committees whose secretariat is provided by the offices of the above organization. And this despite the fact that the latter have closer links with the activities of the "administration" they are to advise, and thus have more opportunities to influence what is actually happening.

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21 One exception is the CEDEFOP Management Board.

- Committees whose rights and tasks are not just described as general advisory activities but also include the rights to present their opinions and to take the initiative, have more opportunities to exert influence.

- Committees whose sphere of responsibility is not limited to vocational training but places this in a wider context, can play an important role because they can, for example, influence the framework conditions of vocational training.

- Committees which elect their own chairman and have their own office (secretariat) are less restricted in their opportunities for action than those whose chairman is a member of the Commission or Council staff. However, in the case of the latter it can also be of advantage that the Commission or the Council is, itself, obliged to deal with a committee which means that the work of this committee is nearer to the sources of information.

These are, however, merely constituent formal criteria. In practice, it is often the case that the committees which are "directed" by the Commission develop more activities than others which are not.

2. Individual participating institutions

2.1 Cooperation with the European Parliament

The European Parliament controls the activities of both the Commission and also the Council of the European Community. Before taking decisions, the Council normally has to consult the European Parliament. Furthermore, the Council and Parliament bear joint responsibility for the EC budget.

The European Parliament can, therefore, influence the vocational training policies of the Community to a considerable degree. In particular, its committees for social affairs and employment as well as for youth, culture, education, information and sports deal very closely with these problems.

In the past the European Parliament has repeatedly called on the Commission and the Council to introduce a more effective and more extensive vocational training policy and to use the means available to work in this direction.

Thus, it amended the Commission's proposal for a Council decision on the comparability of vocational training qualifications in the Member States by urgently calling for the introduction of an effective vocational training policy at Community level and by stressing the need to achieve comparability in vocational training qualifications for specific occupations or groups of occupations within a five-year period.

On 12 December 1984, the European Parliament adopted three resolutions for combatting youth unemployment. Here, it was pointed out that the declarations of intent by the Council and the Commission whereby they were going to concentrate all their energy on combatting youth unemployment had not been put into practice, and that the share of the Social Fund in the overall budget had in fact been falling steadily since 1983. The European Parliament condemned both the lack of willingness of the Member Governments to take concerted and coordinated steps to combat youth unemployment and the lack of desire on the part of the Council to undertake coordinated action to redistribute work by reducing working hours.

There is no institutionalized cooperation between the European Parliament, its committees and the social partners. However, there is a relatively well developed informal cooperation involving reciprocal information on problems of vocational training. Furthermore, ETUC representatives can attend meetings of the Social Committee as observers.

2.2 Economic and Social Committee

The Economic and Social Committee is an independent organ of the EC. Of all the committees on which employees are represented, it is the one with the most influence on Community economic and social policy and thus, by extension, on vocational training. For that reason, we

believe it important to give a detailed description of its legal foundation.

The Economic and Social Committee of the European Community has replaced the economic and social committees of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. However, the ECSC Consultative Committee has retained its independence. Article 5 of the merger treaty states:

"The functions which the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community and the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community confer upon the Economic and Social Committee shall be exercised, in accordance with those Treaties, by a single Economic and Social Committee composed and appointed as provided in Article 194 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community and in Article 166 of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community."

And furthermore,

"The provisions of Articles 193 and 197 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community shall apply."

These articles stipulate among other things that

"The Committee shall consist of representatives of the various categories of economic and social activity, in particular, representatives of producers, farmers,

carriers, workers, dealers, craftsmen, professional occupations and representatives of the general public."

With regard to vocational training, the following rights and tasks of the Economic and Social Committee are of particular importance[22]:

Article 4
The Council and the Commission shall be assisted by an Economic and Social Committee acting in an advisory capacity.

Article 49
... the Council shall, acting on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the Economic and Social Committee, issue directives or regulations setting out the measures required to bring about... freedom of movement for workers...

Article 118
Before delivering opinions (on cooperation between the Member States on social issues), the Commission shall consult the Economic and Social Committee.

Article 121
The Council may, acting unanimously and after consulting the Economic and Social Committee, assign to the Commission tasks in connection with the implementation of common

22 Excerpts from the corresponding articles of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community.

measures, particularly as regards social security for the migrant workers referred to in Articles 48 to 51.

Article 198
The Committee must be consulted by the Council or by the Commission where this Treaty so provides. The Committee may be consulted by these institutions in all cases in which they consider it appropriate.

Finally, mention should be made of Article 128 which is of great fundamental importance. It states

"The Council shall, acting on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the Economic and Social Committee, lay down general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy capable of contributing to the harmonious development both of the national economies and of the common market."

This provision is also referred to today when the Council calls on the Economic and Social Committee to prepare opinions on vocational training. The contractual regulations concerning the Economic and Social Committee clearly reveal the intention to involve, in an advisory capacity, the representatives of employers, employees and other important groups in all important questions which are relevant for them.

According to these regulations there can be no Community vocational training policy in which the social partners

have not been given an opportunity to make their positions very clear in the opinion-forming stage.

The Economic and Social Committee and vocational training

This is the reality of the situation. There are hardly any important activities of the Community, hardly any recommendations, directives or programmes on which the Economic and Social Committee has not prepared an opinion, normally at the request of the Council. Thus, Council decisions always contain a reference to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee. The only exceptions are the decisions of the Ministers for Education.

The Committee also makes use of its right to become active on its own initiative and to take up vocational training issues, for instance those connected with new technologies. Many Community acquisitions, for example CEDEFOP, owe their existence not least to the stubborn perseverence of the Economic and Social Committee in general and to that of the employees' representatives in particular.

The opinions on vocational training reveal the basic problem of vocational training policy at EC level. On the one hand, the Committee would like European vocational training policy and the corresponding activities of the Community to go far beyond the present legal and actual scale. On the other hand, it accepts the present situation and strives to achieve improvements in its present

framework. This can be seen very clearly in the following extracts from opinions:

"The Committee has considered whether it would be possible to underscore the urgent need to find a solution to the problems raised by recognizing that the aims of the proposal require not only a resolution but conceivably also Directives or Regulations. The latter course of action would, however, appear to be premature at the present time."[23]

"Given the very diverse vocational training systems and structures that have evolved over time in the countries and regions of the Community, great caution is needed however, in pursuing the objective of harmonization of training levels, if problems such as harmonization downwards are to be avoided."[24]

Thus, in its actual opinions the Committee concentrates on improving the proposals of the Commission in the given framework and expanding on them. It is, nevertheless, normally in agreement with the essence of such proposals. In other words, there are no vocational training activities of the Community which go against the opinion and the advice of this Committee.

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23 Opinion on "vocational training and new information technologies", Official Journal C77-7 of 21 March 1983

24 Opinion on the "comparability of vocational training qualifications between the Member States of the European Community, Official Journal C35-12 of 9 February 1984

2.3 Committees of the Council and the Commission

2.3.1 Standing Committee on Employment

This Committee was established by a Council decision of 12 December 1970. Its members include representatives of European employers' organizations, European employees' organizations, the Council and/or representatives of the Member States and the Commission.

Whilst respecting the provisions of the treaties and the responsibilities of EC bodies and institutions, it is the task of this Committee to ensure a continuous dialogue, concerted efforts and consultation between the Council or, as the case may be, between the governments of the Member States, the Commission and the social partners in order to facilitate coordination of the employment policies of Member States and to bring them into line with Community targets (Article 2, Paragraph 1, "establishing decision").

The committee carries out its given tasks before the competent institution elaborates any decisions.

The trade unions regard the Standing Committee on Employment as the only official structure within which governments, employers, trade unions and the Commission can come together.

Since the resumption of its work in 1975, the Standing Committee on Employment has concentrated more on specific issues such as:

- unemployment;
- job prospects, in particular for young people;
- review of the European Social Fund;
- Social Fund retraining schemes in connection with the employment crisis;
- problems of migrant workers;
- coordination of Community financing instruments such as the European Social Fund, European Regional Fund, etc.

Here, as in employment policy, vocational training plays an important role. The concluding remarks of the chairman at the last (31st) meeting contain the following statement:

"The Committee believes that a forward-looking labour market policy can only be effective if coupled with an adjustment of education, vocational training and retraining programmes both inside and outside enterprises in line with the requirements which could be identified thanks to just such a forward-looking labour market policy[25].

However, to date the Committee has not dealt explicitly with questions of vocational training as an independent Community policy.

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25 Press releases, Brussels, 22 May 1986

ETUC recognizes that this procedure has been considerably improved although the trade unions are still not completely satisfied with the progress made[26].

2.3.2. Tripartite Conference

The three-pronged economic and social conference (Tripartite Conference) works on an informal basis. At these Tripartite Conferences, representatives of the Council, the Member States (at minister level), the Commission and employers' and employees' organizations come together in an attempt to develop "concerted action on key issues of Community economic and social policy between the social partners and public authorities".

Here, the pattern of participants may change depending on the subject to be examined. To date, there have been four Tripartite Conferences. The first one took place in 1970, the last in 1978.

From the trade union viewpoint, these conferences have not proved "to be a very suitable forum for implementing the economic and political goals under the prevailing conditions"[27]. For that reason, the trade unions have suspended their initiatives in this direction for the time being. Instead, ETUC is striving to wield increased direct influence at the various political decision-making levels and in the European Institutions.

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26 ETUC Report on Activities 1982-1984
27 GTUF Report on Activities 1979-1981, Düsseldorf, 1981

Vocational training issues were only explicitly mentioned on the agenda of the first Tripartite Conference although they did crop up in the other subjects to be discussed.

2.3.3 Val Duchesse

The name Val Duchesse[28] signifies new efforts by the European Communities to promote the "European Social Dialogue" and to achieve concrete results.

In its decision of 22 June 1984 on "Medium-term Social Action by the Community", the Council noted inter alia that the prerequisite for the implementation of a European social policy and common industrial strategies was the pursuit and development of a dialogue between the social partners at European level. It invited the Commission to examine whether, within the framework of existing mechanisms, the dialogue between the social partners could be improved and suitable methods developed which - whilst fully respecting the independence and responsibilty of the social partners - would help to develop parity-based relations at Community level.

This new "Social Dialogue" was initiated between the social partners at the suggestion of the Commission in 1985. The social partners were represented by members of the Employers' Liaison Committee of the European Community (ELC), the European Centre of Public Enterprises (CEEP) and

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28 A small castle on the outskirts of Brussels.

the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). Discussions in two working groups, one dealing with macro-economic and the other with micro-economic subjects, produced agreement on a series of questions[29].

These included the need to promote research, development and vocational training and also the common belief that improvements in workers' qualifications and their further vocational training were important factors for the further development of employment and the competitiveness of the European economy.

At Community level the Commission is going to strive towards a further intensification of the social dialogue. There are several indications that this will also have a positive effect on the role of the social partners in vocational training.

2.4 Committees of the Commission

2.4.1. ECSC Consultative Committee

The Consultative Committee attached to the High Authority[30] (Commission) of the European Coal and Steel Community was created by the ECSC treaty of 1951. It is the oldest consultative body of the European Communities in which the

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29 Annual Economic Report 1986-1987, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 1987

30 In 1965 this Authority was replaced by the EC Commission.

social partners are represented on an equal basis. It consists of an equal number of representatives of manufacturers (employers), employees, consumers and dealers. In the case of vocational training the following rights and tasks of this Consultative Committee are of importance:

- Article 19
  The High Authority may consult the Consultative Committee in all cases in which it considers this appropriate. It must do so whenever such consultation is prescribed by this Treaty.

- Article 48
  Where this Treaty requires the Consultative Committee to be consulted, any association shall have the right to submit to the High Authority, within such time as the latter may set, the comments of its members on the proposed course of action.

- Article 56
  The High Authority shall provide non-repayable aid towards the financing of vocational retraining for workers having to change their employment. Here, it shall obtain the opinion of the Consultative Committee.

2.4.2 Advisory Committee on Freedom of Movement for Workers

This Committee was established by the Council Decision of 16 August 1961. It consists of two government

representatives, two representatives of employers' organizations and two representatives of trade unions from each Member State. Each of these groups has an alternate member.

Its duties also include (if the Commission so desires) the preparation of opinions on programmes or measures which can help to promote vocational education and vocational training in the interests of greater mobility and improved employment opportunities.

However, in the last few years the Committee has not looked at vocational training issues.

2.4.3 European Social Fund Committee

According to Article 124 of the EEC treaty the Commission is supported in the administration of the European Social Fund

"by a Committee which consists of two representatives of the Government, two representatives of trade unions and two representatives of employers' organizations of each Member State".

At present this Committee has two government and two trade union representatives and two representatives of employers' organizations for each Member State. Furthermore, each Member State and each of the two above-mentioned groups has an alternate member.

Concerning the actual tasks of this Committee, the rules adopted by the Council of the European Communities stipulate the following

"The Committee shall give opinions on:

a) proposals and drafts concerning the rules governing the tasks and operation of the Fund;

b) decisions applying the rules governing the tasks and operation of the Fund;

c) the guidelines for the management of the Fund;

d) the preliminary draft of the budget relating to the Fund;

e) applications for assistance from the Fund."

They further stipulate

"Where the Commission departs from an opinion of the Committee it shall inform the Committee within 40 days of the reasons for its decision.

The Commission shall inform the Committee regularly of the principal aspects of Community policy on economic and social affairs."[31]

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31 Official Journal No L289/42 of 22 October 1983, Luxembourg

ETUC is quite negative in its assessment of the Committee's activities. In its Report on Activities 1982-1984 it remarks

"Despite the gratifying summary this Committee gives of its working meetings in ETUC, the evaluation of the meetings of the ESF Committee is disappointing. The agenda for its two to three meetings a year is packed, the conference room is crammed with more than 100 people, and the important issues are decided in advance. This all means that at present the Committee is no more than a mouthpiece for the ESF administration, a forum at which the Social Fund cake is divided up amongst the national bureaucrats prior to the meetings."

Up to now, the social partners only had roughly one hour for discussions before the meetings. Of course, this was not enough in order to examine the issues and form an opinion. For this, considerably more time would be needed. In principle, the Economic and Social Committee is heading in the same direction when it notes is its "opinion on the review of the ESF" of 23/24 March 1983 that

"it is necessary to ensure involvement of the two sides of industry in the ESF Committee and in the preparation of programmes at national and local level."[32]

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32 Official Journal No C124 of 9 May 1983

Despite these on the whole rather critical statements, it can be said that the employees do wield considerable influence on the important decisions in ESF policy in general and on the allocation of funds in particular.

Of course it is quite another matter whether the ESF instrument has helped to strengthen the role of the social partners in Member States as far as the actual implementation of vocational training is concerned. There are very few signs of an EC policy with this objective.

Thus, in its decision on the rules of the ESF Committee, the Council states

"The Council notes that in the framework of the rules and practices in force at national level, Member States will endeavour, wherever appropriate, to involve workers and employers in the examination of the problems which may be raised by certain requests for Fund assistance."[33]

There is, therefore, a two-fold restriction on the involvement of the social partners. On the one hand, they are only to be involved when this is common practice and when provision has been made for their involvement at national level. And on the other hand, they are only to be involved "wherever appropriate".

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33 Official Journal No L289/44 of 22 October 1983, Luxembourg

In the Commission's guidelines of 10 January 1984 on the administration of the European Social Fund it was envisaged that priority should be given to measures which aim to promote projects which are innovative and which provide for close cooperation between all those concerned - including the social partners - in their conception and implementation. This reference to the social partners was removed from the guidelines which were approved at a later date.

2.4.4 Advisory Committee on Vocational Training

This Committee was established by the EC Council Decision of 2 April 1963 "laying down the general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy".

The fourth principle states

"When carrying out the tasks assigned to it in the field of vocational training, the Commission shall be assisted by a tripartite advisory committee whose composition and rules[34] shall be laid down by the Council after receiving the Opinion of the Commission."

Thus, in its first and, to date, most important decision on Community vocational training policy, the Council made it clear that it welcomes the support of the social partners not only for the preparation of policies, programmes, etc. but also for their implementation. Furthermore, it states

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34 Official Journal of the European Communities of 20 April 1963

that this cooperation should be given an institutional framework.

The Advisory Committee on Vocational Training consists of two representatives of the government, two representatives of trade unions and two representatives of employers' organizations of each Member State. Each of these groups has an alternate member.

The Committee submits founded opinions on general or basic questions of vocational training to the Commission either at the latter's request or on its own initiative. The Commission provides the Committee with all the necessary documents and informs it of its projects[35].

The Advisory Committee on Vocational Training is a forum in which no vote is normally taken on the individual subjects under discussion. This procedure was only pursued in the initial stages. Thus, it differs in its working methods from the Economic and Social Committee, for example.

Closely connected with this is the fact that the groups represented on the Committee cannot, as a rule, present unanimous group opinions on the matters to be discussed. The opinions expressed by the individual members of the groups often deviate from those of the other members of the same group.

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35 Rules of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, Official Journal of the European Communities of 30 December 1963

This gives the Commission an opportunity to obtain several opinions and proposals simultaneously. Another advantage is that the Committee members have an opportunity to voice their own "personal opinions" instead of having to adhere to previously agreed proposals particularly as the Committee is not, in any case, a decision-making forum. On the other hand, however, it reduces the possibilities of referring to the overall opinion of the Committee.

It is quite evident that since the mid-1970s this Committee's work has been better organized and more efficient. For example, a steering committee has been set up which prepares, together with the offices of the Commission, the consultative meetings of the Committee. It is not a formal body; it cannot and should not anticipate or take the place of the consultations of the Committee but it can help to increase the effectiveness of the Committee's work. In this steering group, the various groups are made up in such a way that almost each Member State is represented. Furthermore, it has one representative from ETUC and one representative from ELC or UNICE.

Working groups were formed to prepare the consultations on individual projects, etc. This meant that the Committee could be involved at an even earlier stage in the considerations of the offices of the Commission and could, therefore, influence them.

The individual groups in the Committee have an opportunity to meet parallel to the Committee meetings in order to hold preparatory discussions.

This also means that the documents which are supplied to the Committee by the offices of the Commission for consultation or information purposes have been better prepared for these purposes.

The Committee has made special mention of these improvements at several of its meetings although it is still not completely satisfied with its opportunities for taking action.

2.5 Sectoral joint committees

In this chapter we are going to deal with the sectoral joint committees. Viewed systematically, these committees are not solely institutions either of the Commission or of the trade unions. They occupy a special position both in this report and also in their role vis-à-vis the organs of the EC.

Membership of the joint committees is restricted to the social partners; there are no representatives of the Commission, Council or national ministries. Initially, these committees were only envisaged for those economic branches (sectors) for which the Treaties stipulate a common policy. One example is the ECSC which had the first

joint committees, namely for coal and steel; further examples are agriculture and transport.

The foundation for the creation and work of such committees in further areas was provided by a statement of heads of government and state at the Paris Summit Conference in 1972. Here, an important objective was to ease the adoption of European framework agreements in suitable areas between the social partners (parties to collective agreements).

These committees offer the parties to collective agreements an opportunity to come together at European level for negotiations. To date, however, voluntary agreements or framework tariff agreements have only been reached in agriculture, for example, on working hours. However, there have not been any agreements of this kind on vocational training in that sector either.

Vis-à-vis Community institutions, most of the joint committees can only express an opinion when asked to do so. However, more recent decisions of the Commission have now given them an opportunity to express an opinion on their own initiative.

2.5.1 Mixed Steel Committee

The Mixed Committee for the Harmonization of Working Conditions in the Iron and Steel Industry was set up by the

Commission following a resolution of the ECSC Consultative Committee of 20 December 1954.

In general terms, its task is to support the Commission of the European Communities in its activities as stipulated in the ECSC treaty, and to plan and shape Community social policy in order to promote harmonization by means of progress and improvements in the living and working conditions of workers in the iron and steel industry. In this respect, it can also act on its own initiative.

The Committee serves as a forum for dialogue, for the mutual exchange of information, the promotion of concerted action between the social partners and for the examination of suitable initiatives in its sphere of responsibility.

As far as vocational training issues are concerned, the Committee has limited itself so far to the exchange of information. No initiatives for a common vocational training policy have been taken for a long time nor has the employees'group taken any initiatives in this field.

The Committee is chaired for the period of one year by a representative of the employers and then for the next period by a representative of the employees. The secretariat of the Committee is run by the offices of the Commission. The Committee can also form working groups. It has a general working group but no group for vocational training.

After a long interval this Committee looked at vocational training issues on 2 July and 25 November 1985. It decided to continue its examination on the basis of concrete proposals from Committee members. In the beginning, this examination was to be limited to the acute problem of further and continuing training for workers who were to remain in the steel industry.

2.5.2 Mixed Coal Committee

The Mixed Committee for the Harmonization of Working Conditions in the Coalmining Industry has been in existence since 1955. Its task is to support the Commission of the European Communities. Its aim is to improve and harmonize the living and working conditions of coal workers in line with progress made.

This Committee is a forum for discussion, for the mutual exchange of information and for consultation between the social partners. It can deliver opinions and recommendations on its own initiatve or at the request of the Commission. To date, its activities in the field of vocational training have been limited to the mutual exchange of information.

The Committee is chaired for the period of one year by a representative of the employers and then for the next period by a representative of the employees. The secretariat is manned by the offices of the Commission. The Committee can set up working groups. It, too, has a

general working group but again no group for vocational training.

More recent developments indicate that the Committee intends to look more closely at questions of vocational training. At its meeting on 13 and 14 March 1986, it discussed a comprehensive "presentation of the systems of training for first-time job seekers in the coalmining industry of the European Community" and it wants to continue with this work. To date, however, these activities have only involved the mutual exchange of information. They should not be seen as the first step towards proposals for a common policy by the organs of the EC. Nor is it known to us that the employees' representatives have made such proposals.

2.5.3 Joint Advisory Committee on Social Questions relating to Agricultural Workers

This Committee was set up in 1963 at the request of the European Parliament and the professional agricultural organizations in Brussels. In 1976 the Commission extended its powers by giving it the right to act on its own initiative and it has frequently made use of this right[36]. Its task is to support the Commission in the planning and implementation of the common social policy which aims to improve and harmonize the living and working conditions of agricultural workers.

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36 Social Europe, No 3/84

The European Federation of Agricultural Workers' Unions (EFA) within the European Community attaches considerable importance to this Committee. At its ninth congress, EFA decided

"The Joint Committee is an essential instrument in that it is the main body for negotiations with agricultural employers. It is thus the task of EFA organs to see that the activities of the Joint Committee are developed in line with the interests of the workers.

EFA requests the Commission to make a secretariat and adequate financial resources available to the Joint Committee so as to facilitate the achievement of the objectives which have been set."[37]

By contrast, the trade unions lament the fact that the activities of the Committee have been affected by financial restrictions. Despite this handicap, the Joint Committee had undertaken important work[38].

To date, the Joint Advisory Committee on Social Questions relating to Agricultural Workers appears to be the only committee which has prepared recommendations for national tariff policy which have actually been implemented, for instance, concerning working hours. However, the last recommendation of this kind dates back almost ten years.

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37 EFA Report on Activities, Brussels, October 1985
38 ibid.

Within this Committee there is a working group for vocational training. It is made up of nine or ten members from each side.

In recent years this working group has become active again. This was prompted in particular by its involvement in the work of CEDEFOP on preparing the harmonization of training levels (comparability) in this field.

It meets two or three times a year. The working group has prepared a proposal for the further development of vocational training in its field. This proposal has been submitted to the Joint Advisory Committee for comment.

This Joint Committee does not participate in the negotiations and decisions on the allotment of Community financial aid which is granted within the framework of structural measures for vocational training, too.

An important institution of the social partners in this field is the European Training and Promotion Centre for Farming and Rural Life (CEPFAR).

The focus of its activities is not however vocational training in the strict sense but rather the associated social, political and economic issues.

In CEPFAR bodies the trade unions account for just under 25% of the members and/or votes.

2.5.4 Joint Advisory Committee on Social Questions in the Sea-fishing Industry

This Committee was set up in 1968. Its present structure and duties were determined by a decision of the Commission of 25 July 1974. In accordance with this decision, it has the task of supporting the Commission in the planning and implementation of Community social policy which aims to improve and harmonize the living and working conditions of workers in the fishing industry.

For some years now, this Committee has been more active in this field. Its ad-hoc working group has initiated various activities including the exchange of trainers at Community level, the development of teaching material (modules), and the exchange of experience acquired in the course of the pilot projects using new technologies.

Limited funds have been made available from the budget of the Community for these activities. The corresponding budgetry item is entitled "activities aiming to develop a Community policy in respect of vocational education and training in the fishing sector".

The focus of all its activities so far has been the exchange of information and, at best, limited cooperation on the development of teaching material. This still cannot be termed a "real" Community policy, i.e. one which would deal with the development of common regulations, the mutual recognition of schemes or certificates or even joint

institutions. And all the indications seem to be that this will not come about.

However, the fishing sector is currently the most active in vocational training within the framework of the social dialogue.

2.5.5 Joint Advisory Committee on Social Questions in Inland Water Transport

The Joint Advisory Committee on Social Questions in Inland Water Transport was established by a Commission Decision of 28 November 1967. A further Commission Decision of 9 October 1980 gave it new rules.

Its task is to support the Commission in the planning and implementation of Community social policy in order to improve and harmonize the living and working conditions of workers in inland water transport.

In 1985 the Committee set up a working group for "harmonization at vocational training level".

2.5.6 Joint Advisory Committee on Social Questions in Road Transport

There has been a Joint Advisory Committe in this field since 1965. The Commission Decision of 18 November 1985 gave it new rules.

Its task is to support the Commission in the planning and implementation of Community social policy in order to improve and harmonize the living and working conditions of road transport workers.

Little is known about specific activities in this field or about special vocational training bodies.

2.5.7 Advisory Committee on Social Questions in the Railways

This Committee has also been in existence for several years. The Comission Decision of 19 December 1985 granted it new rules.

Its task is to support the Commission in the planning and implementation of Community social policy in order to improve and harmonize the living and working conditions of railway workers.

One of this Committee's working groups has begun to investigate the social aspects of introducing new technologies including initial and further vocational training particularly in respect of express and high-speed trains.

2.5.8 Further forms of the social dialogue at sectoral level

Contacts at European level between the social partners are

not restricted to areas in which there are mixed or joint committees. It is very possible that such contacts may be more fruitful and more intense than those in specific joint committees, for example, in the shoe industry where the joint committee was "put on ice" in 1980.

On the other hand, it should not be overlooked that the creation of a joint committee means that the employers, employees and the Commission are ready to enter into a social dialogue in this field. Where attempts to set up a committee fail, it usually means that one of the three parties concerned has general reservations or reservations about the subject and scale of the social dialogue in that particular field. Usually it is the employers who are against such committees.

With the exception of the above-mentioned Joint Advisory Committee for the Shoe Industry, no other committees were set up after 1971. At an informal level there are isolated cases of more or less regular contacts between the social partners in the following fields:

Construction industry

Here, many forms of meetings take place between the social partners, the Commission and CEDEFOP at which questions of common interest are discussed.

For years, the social partners have been striving to set up a "European Documentation Centre for Vocational Training in

the Construction Industry" to be financed jointly by themselves and the Commission. And here they have undertaken very substantial preparatory work. But up to now this project has failed because of the unwillingness of the Commission to provide adequate financial support.

Banking

In discussions to date between the social partners, vocational training was looked upon at best as a component in other issues such as new technologies, the development of employment or the organization of work.

There are no special negotiations on vocational training or even any joint vocational training activities.

Metalworking Sector

EMF (European Metalworkers' Federation in the Community) has tried to establish consultations with employers for some sub-sectors. However, the success here has been very limited.

- Machine tools
  Here a dialogue was initiated on vocational training issues. It began by examining future occupational profiles and their integration into the vocational training systems in the individual states.

- Car industry
  Corresponding efforts by EMF were rejected by the employers.

- Shipbuilding
  Corresponding proposals by EMF were rejected by employers on the grounds that they had no responsibility for this area.

2.6 European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

The intensity of the social partner's influence on the one hand and the actual limitations to it on the other can be illustrated very clearly using the example of CEDEFOP. They draw their considerable influence mainly from the fact that as members of the Management Board they not only discuss CEDEFOP activities but are also involved in decisions. This applies in particular to the work programme but also to the budget and other institutional matters. Furthermore, the social partners have for some years now been directly involved in the implementation and evaluation of important projects.

The limitations result above all from the role of CEDEFOP in the EC set-up and from its influence on vocational training policy and vocational training practices at Community and national levels. It is circumscribed in several ways. The following extracts from the regulation establishing CEDEFOP [38a] illustrate this very clearly:

- The aim of the CEDEFOP shall be to assist the Commission. It, therefore, has no independant autonomous position (Article 2).

38a Regulation establishing a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, Official Journal No L39 of 13 February 1975

- The financial framework and staffing issues are decided in the last instance by the Commission and Council and not by the Management Board (Article 11).

- The work programme has to be approved by the Commission. This "monitoring" goes beyond legal supervision (Article 8).

- Its activities are basically limited to the processing and dissemination of information (exchange of experience) (Article 2).

This rather formal description does not give a complete picture of the role played by the social partners through CEDEFOP and of the role played by CEDEFOP through the social partners. In reality, a Management Board based on such a composition does not only work inwards (which is its actual task) but also outwards.

The Management Board is a forum where opinions on vocational training policy are formed; it encourages agreement between the groups on all important vocational training issues, not just on those which have been incorporated into the Centre's programmes. Thus, its activities extend, on an informal level, to the policy of EC bodies and also to national vocational training policies.

The members of the Management Board are usually members of other EC bodies. Through their activities in CEDEFOP they

are better informed than their colleagues. However, we should not forget that the role of the social partners in vocational training cannot be measured according to their influence on the activities of CEDEFOP, but, first and foremost, according to the influence of CEDEFOP itself on vocational training in the European Community.

2.7 Other international institutions

2.7.1 Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is not an agency of the European Community but a committee composed of government representatives and a Parliamentary Assembly composed of representatives from 21 European countries.

As far as the subject of this report is concerned, the European Social Charter is of particular importance. It guarantees a series of basic rights including the right to work, the right to vocational training and the right to form a trade union.

Article 10 of the Social Charter states

"With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to vocational training, the Contracting Parties undertake:

1. to provide or promote, as necessary, the technical and vocational training of all persons, including the

handicapped, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations, and to grant facilities for access to higher technical and university education, based solely on individual aptitude;

2. to provide or promote a system of apprenticeship and other systematic arrangements for training young boys and girls in their various employments."

The Social Charter contains several regulations for monitoring this undertaking and other undertakings entered into by the governments. The contracting partners i.e. the governments, have to send to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe a report at two-yearly intervals concerning the application of all the provisions they have accepted.

The social partners are involved in the following way in examining these reports:

- The national employers' and employees' organizations recieve copies of these reports from the national governments. The governments forward to the Secretary General any comments on the said reports received from these national organizations, if so requested by them.

- Observers from international employers'and employees' organizations are invited in a consultative capacity to the examination of the reports by a sub-committee of the governmental social committee.

At the insistence of the trade unions, the Council of Europe also organizes consultations on important issues of social policy in which the trade unions or the experts appointed by them can present an opinion. Consultations on vocational training have not taken place so far.

The trade unions have been striving, without any success so far, to obtain official advisory status with the Council of Europe. For some years now, there has been a so-called liaison committee which brings together employers' representatives and ETUC representatives once a year for discussions.

Finally, there are also regular consultations between the social partners prior to the conferences of ministers in the fields of labour and social security. However at least in the case of the last two consultations, no vocational training issues were dealt with.

Loans for vocational training schemes can also be obtained from the Council of Europe's Reintegration Fund. However, the social partners are not involved in consultations or decisions about this.

In addition, the Council of Europe promotes two grant programmes for continuing training. The first enables trainers to undertake study visits in other Member States. The second gives skilled workers an opportunity to attend teacher training courses in more highly developed Member

States. There are no other Council of Europe funds or programmes for vocational training.

2.7.2 International Labour Organization (ILO)

The International Labour Organization is a forum for the development of common measures by government, employers and trade unions in order to promote social justice and improve living conditions throughout the world.

ILO is a special agency of the United Nations. At present, its membership extends to one hundred and fifty states. In ILO decision-making bodies (International Labour Conference, Governing Body) government representatives hold 50% of the seats or votes and employee and employer representatives 25% respectively.

ILO is a tripartite organization in which the employers and employees can work on an equal footing with governments although they cannot outvote them.

In the case of vocational training the following activities of ILO are of particular importance:

- Agreements and recommendations for International Labour Standards
  They are elaborated by the International Labour Conference. The Member States which ratify such agreements are obliged to implement the regulations contained therein. A recommendation is meant to be a

guideline for policies, legislation and the day-to-day practices of governments. These agreements and recommendations also cover fields such as:

. vocational training,
. vocational reintegration,
. further training schemes for executives, and
. educational leave.

- Programmes for the promotion of vocational training
  Programmes of this kind are being implemented mainly in Africa, Asia and Latin America. They are designed to support the elaboration of training policies and systems, the training of executives, vocational training in industry in rural areas and in commerce as well as the elaboration of teaching methods and material. Particular attention is paid to vocational training schemes for the handicapped and training programmes for women and young people who have not received any form of training.

The International Labour Office is the permanent secretariat of ILO. In Geneva it also has a Regional Office for Europe. However, there is no special collaboration between employees' representatives in EC bodies and in ILO bodies specifically for the EC area.

2.8 Limits to influence and opportunities for change

EC legislation has drawn up very clear boundaries to the "codetermination practice" of the social partners. This considerably limits their influence.

The social partners can only influence the decisions of Community bodies and institutions by way of formal and informal consultations, hearings, and opinions drawn up at their own initiative, etc., that is by contributing to the "opinion-forming process". There are no regulations, at least in vocational training[39], which make decisions dependent on the approval or agreement of the social partners or of the bodies in which they are represented. Nor do the social partners have any rights in respect of the implementation of concrete EC schemes, e.g. projects sponsored by the Social Fund or pilot programmes.

Nor is there any way of providing for their active participation in the allocation of EC funds which would go beyond the given national procedures. The respective national responsibilities could not be changed by the imposition of EC regulations on the right to participation, even if this were a goal of Community vocational training policy.

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39 The situation is different in the case of CEDEFOP only; its Management Board has more extensive rights and duties.

The consequences are more far-reaching for employees than for employers who exert their influence in practice in the various Member States in any case.

V Instruments of the European Community

1. EC possibilities determine the role of the social partners

Within the framework of this study it was neither possible nor the intention to examine in detail all the instruments which are available to the European Communities for the implementation of its policies in general and for vocational training in particular.

However, if no mention were to be made of the instruments available to the EC and the instruments they use for vocational training, it would be utterly impossible to describe the role of vocational training in the EC and the influence of the social partners. Whether a European recommendation or directive has been discussed and has met with the approval of the social partners is one thing; what it contains and how it is to be implemented is another. Both factors belong together if we wish to obtain a picture of the role of the social partners.

According to Article 189 of the EEC treaty, the Council and the Commission issue regulations, directives and decisions and deliver recommendations or opinions in the course of their duties pursuant to the above treaty.

These are not the only instruments of the European vocational training policy. For example, the various funds

and the information/documentation activities of EC institutions and offices are of particular importance.

For that reason, a brief description will be given here of the instruments which are, in principle, available. Examples will be given in order to illustrate how and the extent to which they have been used so far in vocational training.

2. Regulations

Article 189 of the EEC treaty states

"A regulation shall have general application. It shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States."

Thus, regulations are the most effective general instruments available to the Community.

The historic example for European vocational training policy is Regulation No 1612 of 15 October 1968. Article 12 states

"The children of a national of a Member State who is or has been employed in the territory of another Member State shall be admitted to that State's general educational, apprenticeship and vocational training courses under the same conditions as the nationals of that State if such children are residing in its territory."

What is important here is that this regulation does not regulate education or vocational training in the Member States. It simply regulates free access to it.

We are not aware of any other regulations which directly affect vocational training.

3. Directives

Article 189 of the EEC treaty states

"A directive shall be binding, as to the result to be achieved, upon each Member State to which it is addressed, but shall leave to the national authorities the choice of form and methods."

Directives impose a binding framework within which the national laws or regulations necessary to achieve the set targets have to be introduced.

Theoretically, the EC Council could, with the help of directives, ensure that the Member States pursue a uniform vocational training policy in terms of objectives and results. However, the great majority are of the opinion that the Community has no legal basis for such action. And this quite apart from the fact that not one of the governments represented on the Council would support a

guideline going against the political intentions of its own country or going beyond its possibilites[40].

Therefore, it is only possible to issue directives for a few sub-sectors or sub-objectives. Thus, there are some directives which have been issued by the EC Council of Ministers on 16 July 1975 on the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other qualifications for doctors, further occupations in the health sector and for some liberal occupations in EC Member States.

There are, however, no directives on the mutual recognition of vocational training certificates, merely a decision on "comparability". This again shows that vocational training is subject to special conditions.

4. Decisions

Article 189 of the EEC treaty states

"A decision shall be binding in its entirety upon those to whom it is addressed."

Well-known Commission decisions cover, for instance, production quotas for coal and steel or the level of subsidies from the European Social Fund for recruitment and employment assistance.

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40 See in this connection, the background to the Youth Guarantee going from the initial discussions to the contents of decisions.

Decisions on matters of vocational training are not expressly envisaged in the EC treaties and to date no such decisions have been taken. The Council Decision of 16 July 1985 on the comparability of vocational training qualifications is described as a decision but according to Article 189 it is not the texts on comparability which have the character of a decision, only the texts on procedure.

5. Recommendations and opinions

Article 189 of the EEC treaty states

"Recommendations and opinions shall have no binding force."

In vocational training the organs of the Community have made considerable use of this non-binding instrument. There are numerous resolutions in this area for example on:

- the extension of vocational guidance,
- alternance training,
- vocational preparation for unemployed young people.

The common goals of the Member States and their own obligations make up the nucleus of such resolutions. On the whole, however, they are formulated in rather general and non-binding terms.

6. European Social Fund

The European Social Fund was set up in order to improve employment opportunities for workers in the Common Market and to contribute thereby to raising the standard of living. Its task is to render the employment of workers easier and to increase their geographical and occupational mobility within the Community.

The European Social Fund is, therefore, an important instrument in vocational training policy. Since its creation, the Council has laid down, in several decisions, the individual duties of the Social Fund and developed them further. Here, the promotion of vocational training was always a major aspect which has assumed increasing importance.

In the Council decision of 17 October 1983, which is still valid today, concerning the tasks of the European Social Fund, it was stipulated inter alia that the Fund should participate in the funding of operations concerning:

a) vocational training and guidance,
b) recruitment and wage subsidies,
c) resettlement and socio-vocational integration in connection with geographical mobility,
d) services and technical advice concerned with job creation.

This decision also envisages that annually at least 75% of all available credits are to be used for subsidies to promote the employment of young people under 25 years of age, in particular those who have poor job prospects because they have not received any or only inadequate vocational training, and those who are affected by long-term unemployment.

The last Report on Activities to date reveals that in 1985 subsidies amounting to ECU 2 218.79 million were approved. 2 740 000 people benefited from these subsidies.

Leaving aside clearly detailed exceptions, the subsidies for the individual schemes amounted to 50% of the expenditure qualifying for such assistance.

If it is assumed that these schemes could not have taken place without assistance from the Fund, then it is quite evident that the European Social Fund is a very important and effective instrument of Community vocational training policy.

However, the 1985 Report on Activities does also state that

"In the case of the larger programmes which were conceived by some Member States at national level, the additional effects of the Fund participation are sometimes limited. As such programmes have considerable funds at their disposal which are provided according to national criteria, and as they cover a large number of people and

are based on established administrative structures, the financial participation of the Fund more or less means relief for the state."

7. European Regional Fund

Unlike the Social Fund, the European Regional Fund is not explicitly mentioned in the Treaties establishing the European Communities. It was not until 9-10 December 1974 that government and state heads approved the decision to set up a European Regional Fund as of 1 January 1975, and to create a Committee for Regional Policy.

This heralded the introduction of a Community regional policy. The first Regional Fund was set up for a period of three years with a total budget of DM 4.75 thousand million. Since 1978 the Fund has been an established feature in the annual budgetary procedures of the Community. In 1983 its budget amounted to DM 2.85 thousand million.

The bulk of the subsidies was provided for investments in infrastructure, including vocational training centres and schools, investments in commercial, craft and service enterprises, and national programmes of interest to the Community.

The social partners are not involved in the Regional Fund either through an advisory committee or through direct consultations on the fixing of policies and the allocation

of funds. Nor are they members of the Committee for Regional Policy.

8. Other Forms of Financial Aid

In some areas, the European Community can grant financial assistance for the implementation of jointly agreed measures, or a common policy. This includes:

8.1 Sectors of common policy

Such assistance can be granted first and foremost for areas in which the establishing treaties envisage a common policy, for instance in areas such as coal, steel and agriculture. This also takes in the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) which accounts for roughly two-thirds of the overall EC budget, and special financial assistance in the field of transport infrastructure.

Measures which qualify for financial aid are primarily economic or social in character. This category also includes vocational training measures such as retraining or further training in the case of industrial restructuring, and subsidies for the creation of training centres for the coal and steel sectors.

To date, there has been no direct involvement of the social partners in the allocation of these funds, either via the advisory committees or other forms of consultation.

8.2 Integrated Mediterranean Programmes (IMP)

The Integrated Mediterranean Programmes constitute special action by the Community to benefit the present group of Mediterranean regions. Their goal is to improve the socio-economic structures of these regions, particularly in Greece in order to enable them to adapt, under the best possible conditions, to the new situation created by the extension of the European Community.

IMP schemes are financed from existing funds, additional budgetary credits of the Community and loans.

Assistance is also given to vocational training schemes, including the setting up of training centres.

The social partners are not represented on the IMP Advisory Committee.

9. Promotion of pilot schemes and studies

Based on Article 128 of the EEC Treaty and the "general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy"[41] which were approved on 2 April 1963, the Council and the Commission are increasingly inclined, with regard to the respective programmes and measures, to make

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41 Tenth principle: "Measures taken with a view to attaining the objectives of the common vocational training policy may be jointly financed."

budgetary resources of the Commission available for pilot projects and studies, too. Here are some examples:

- Decision of the Council and the Ministers for Education meeting within the Council of 12 July 1982 concerning "measures to be taken to improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from education to working life".

- Council Resolution concerning "vocational training measures relating to new information technologies" of 2 June 1983.

- Council Decision concerning "A New Action Programme for the Promotion of Youth Exchanges in 1986".

In principle, this means the co-financing of schemes which are carried out in a responsible manner by institutions in the Member States; it does not apply to Community schemes.

10. Promotion of Research

The foundations for the promotion of research within the EC are the "Treaties establishing the European Communities" and the Council Resolution of 14 January 1974 on the "coordination of national policies and the definition of projects of interest to the Community in the field of science and technology".

On 25 July 1983 the Council approved the first "framework programme for Community research, development and demonstration activities 1984 to 1987" submitted by the Commission[42]. The Commission feels that funds amounting to ECU 3 750 million are needed for this programme.

There is no provision, with some very minor exceptions, for vocational training research in this framework programme. Nor are the social partners involved in the planning of the programme or in the allocation of funds.

11. Information and Documentation

EC documentation and information activities in the field of vocational training, which are supported mainly by CEDEFOP and the EURYDICE network, have done much to increase knowledge on vocational training not only amongst those responsible but also amongst those affected by it in the Member States.

Well-known examples are the CEDEFOP publications on the various problems of vocational training and the regular issues of CEDEFOP News, the CEDEFOP Flash, the "Vocational Training" Bulletin and, of course, the Bulletin of the European Communities.

In February 1976 the Council and the Ministers for Education meeting within the Council agreed to set up an

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42 Official Journal No C208 of 4 August 1983.

information network in order to intensify and direct the exchange of information on education and training more effectively. This network was given the name EURYDICE. Today, it has at its disposal an extensive collection of information covering the entire education and training field which is accessible to everyone.

12. Conferences, Seminars, Colloquia

Early on in their activities, the offices of the Commission themselves organized or commissioned others to organize conferences, seminars, colloquia and exchanges of information.

Events of this kind normally have a double objective. On the one hand, they enable experts, politicians, planners, etc. from the Member States and EC institutions to exchange information on specific subjects. On the other, by its choice of themes and participants, the Community has direct access to multipliers who can give concrete form to the idea of a common vocational training policy and to the idea of cooperation.

Conferences and seminars have since become a regular feature in all EC activities or programmes of action, for example in recent years the:

- conferences on the "effects of micro-electronics in the European Community" in Berlin in 1982;

- seminar on small and medium-sized enterprises in Luxembourg in 1983;

- conference on the "effects on employment and training in enterprises in the future" in Turin in 1986.

In addition, there are the programmes which give vocational training experts an opportunity to inform themselves on vocational training in other EC Member States.

13. Summary

Following the creation of the European Community, many people believed that it would be possible to exercise considerable and direct influence by means of Community acts on vocational training in the Member States. After the initial experience-gathering phase, Community bodies switched more and more to less far-reaching instruments.

"This outline shows that while the instruments available to the Community are very varied in nature, most of them are without binding effect. A chart showing the relative frequency of utilization of these instruments would appear as a pyramid in which regulations were at the apex and information and documentation activities made up the base"[43].

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43 An Education Policy for Europe, p. 10, Luxembourg

If the "general principles" of 1963 constituted a Council decision with very concrete instructions to, and expectations of the Member States, then the decisions which soon followed had more the character of recommendations and resolutions.

Many of the instructions and expectations contained in the principles for implementing a common vocational training policy could not be fulfilled, for example:

- opportunities for everyone to acquire the technical knowledge and skill necessary to pursue a given occupation and to reach the highest possible level of training (2d);

- forecasts and estimates, at both national and Community levels, of the quantitative and qualitative requirements of workers in the various productive activities (3);

- progressive harmonization of training levels (8);

- harmonization of the standards required for success in final examinations with a view to the mutual recognition of certificates and other documents confirming completion of vocational training (8).

And a later extension to the principles - as was envisaged in 1963 - has not been made so far, unless the individual

decisions taken within the framework of the principles are regarded as such.

Despite many common features, there are still major differences in the vocational training policies of Member States which are not solely due to the different initial economic and social conditions but are also an expression of different targets.

Important issues which shape training practice (for example compulsory education and training, decisions to build or not to build schools, the existence or non-existence of vocational training contracts and the people involved, the contents of individual training courses) can be discussed with the social partners at European level, and even recommendations can be elaborated. These topics cannot, however, become the object of binding decisions.

VI Role of the Social Partners as Demonstrated by Actual EC Activities

1. Example: European Social Fund

The European Social Fund can serve as a manifold example of the influence of the social partners.

To begin with, the social partners have the possibility of influencing the activities and the administration of the Fund through various bodies and at different levels.

In addition, their influence is further strengthened by the fact that in both the administration of the Fund and the allocation of funds, priority is increasingly being given to measures which correspond to Community objectives in the fields of employment and vocational training and to the related resolutions, in whose preparation the social partners were also involved.

The European Social Fund is, however, the target of much criticism from the social partners, although it cannot be denied here that even the trade unions face considerable difficulties when it comes to representing employees' interests. Here, in particular, there are conflicts between a "European trade union position" and national interests which on the whole tend rather to weaken the trade union position.

Finally, the European Social Fund can also be quoted as a case in which even when the social partners have adopted the same standpoint, as is the case in the decisions of the Economic and Social Committee, the opportunities for them to influence key issues successfully - in this case the financial resources of the Fund - are very limited.

The following criteria, in particular, are of importance when evaluating the role of the social partners:

1.1 Criticisms and demands of the social partners

These can be summarized under four headings:

1.1.1 The volume of the Fund

For many years now, the employees have been asking for the volume of the Fund to be increased considerably. They feel it should account for at least 10% of the overall Community budget. In reality, it amounted to 6.9% in 1984 and to 8.4% in 1985.

1.1.2 Objectives of the Fund (schemes and programmes)

ETUC agrees with most of the objectives of the Social Fund. It would, however, like to see greater concentration of funds on, and adjustment of objectives in line with current developments. In 1983 it stated that vocational training should remain the principal area of activity of the Social Fund and it supported the utilization of 75% of all the

Fund's resources for young people. Now, however, with regard to the forthcoming review of the Fund, it intends to give up this key area and is calling for concentration on combatting long-term unemployment.

1.1.3 The role of the social partners

ETUC is calling for greater involvement of the social partners by:

- prescribing binding national preconsultations;

- making renewed provision in the project applications for obligatory consultations with the social partners at local and regional levels for each individual project;

- giving the organizations of the social partners an opportunity to prepare themselves adequately, together with their representatives on the Committee of the Social Fund, and to present their findings to that Committee.

1.1.4 Decision-makers

All important decisions are reserved for Community organs:

The volume of the Fund's budget, its tasks and objectives are decided on by the Council normally after consultations with the European Parliament. The Economic and Social

Committee delivers an opinion on the proposals submitted to it in this connection by the Commission. The trade unions and employers' organizations can also voice an opinion on these proposals.

Applications for assistance from the Fund are made via the national governments. Decisions on the applications are taken by the Commission or its offices. Here, the social partners are involved in an advisory capacity through the Committee of the Social Fund.

1.1.5 Commission initiatives

As a rule, the Fund is expected to promote only those schemes which have been put forward by the Member States or the appropriate ministers.

In principle, this means there is less chance of the Commission carrying through certain initiatives and vocational training policies than if the Commission itself were to take the initiative on individual projects, or if the projects were to be run by the Commission itself or by the institutions commissioned to do so. For that reason, the trade unions are calling for the Commission (again) to be given an opportunity to finance innovatory measures which are suggested to it by the social partners at European level. The initiative for at least some of the measures should lie with the Commission.

The question is whether this is not rather a formal consideration. In fact, all measures have to be carried out in the Member States. Thus they can only be implemented if the countries concerned agree and are willing to provide all the necessary services, including co-financing. There is very little difference between this procedure and the submission of an application.

In their criticisms so far, the trade unions seem to have overlooked the fact that the relatively limited scope for Community action in vocational training policy, including the utilization of those funds which have not been earmarked from the outset for key schemes and priority areas, does not result from the administration of the Fund or the scope allowed it but rather from the "structural" conditions under which the Member States protect themselves against direct intervention.

2. Example: Vocational training policy in the European Community during the 1980s

Bearing in mind the responsibilities of the social partners in this area, the Member States - in the course of the next five years - plan to:

- do everything in their power to ensure that all young people, in particular those with no school-leaving certificates or vocational qualifications, who so desire can, upon completion of compulsory education, attend a full-time programme lasting at least six

months and if possible one year. This programme should take in initial training and/or an opportunity to acquire occupational experience as a means of preparing for working life;

- continue, furthermore, within the framework of their national policy and practices, their efforts to ensure that suitable vocational training opportunities for the improvement of know-how and skills are open to young people with inadequate vocational qualifications, especially unemployed youngsters.

These are the key statements in the Council Resolution of 13 July 1983 on vocational training policy in the European Community in the 1980s. This is, however, also the result of negotiations spanning almost 20 years in which the social partners were involved from the very beginning, mainly through the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training. It is still far removed from all the expectations and demands.

This Council decision was preceded by a debate lasting several years on a so-called Youth Guarantee which was intended to ensure (to guarantee) all young people employment and training. It has been under discussion by the Advisory Committee since 1981. They have also been discussing the revision of the principles on vocational training policy since 1976.

However, the "Second Programme of Action" which was discussed by the Advisory Committee in 1972 envisaged the provision of full-time training for all young people.

And again, in the "general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy" which were approved by the Council on 2 April 1963, it was noted that a common vocational training policy had to strive towards the fundamental objective

"of enabling every person to acquire the technical knowledge and skill necessary to pursue a given occupation and to reach the highest possible level of training".

The fact that some twenty years later, the Council decided to guarantee everyone at least six months' training, illustrates how far removed the Community still was from reaching these first objectives. And the social partners were involved in all the consultations without being able to change this.

This discrepancy cannot be explained away by referring to the situation in the nine Member States. Even the countries who were involved from the beginning have not yet achieved all the objectives described in the general principles.

A further aspect is of importance: according to the structure of the Community, the common objectives - in this case the provision of vocational training - are to be

guaranteed not by the Council or Commission but by the Member States.

3. Example: Harmonization of training

In the "general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy" approved by the Council on 2 April 1983, the following comments were made with regard to the harmonization of vocational training in Europe

"The common vocational training policy must, in particular, be so framed as to enable levels of training to be harmonized progressively.

In cooperation with the Member States, the Commission shall, according to requirements, draw up in respect of the various occupations which call for specific training, a standardized description of the basic qualifications required at various levels of training.

On this basis, harmonization of the standards required for success in final examinations should be sought, with a view to the mutual recognition of certificates and other documents confirming completion of vocational training."

More than twenty years later, in July 1985, the Council took its decision on the "comparability of vocational training qualifications between the Member States of the European Community". In the interval between the first and the present Council decision, the employees'

respresentatives in particular had repeatedly called for the implementation of the first decision. They were also very much involved in the preliminary work. But the "realities" proved stronger than political will. The present decision[44] is still far removed from the harmonization of training levels and the recognition of certificates. Here, the aim was to establish that various training courses and qualifications correspond to each other in terms of both the jointly agreed practical occupational requirements and level two[45] of the EC structure of training levels for which they prepare trainees.

This is an example of a situation in which both the Commission and the employees' representatives wanted to adapt a more united stand but where in the last instance they were only able to take the first, albeit important, step.

4. Example: The role of the social partners in the texts of Council decisions

In recent years, the Council has increasingly stressed in its decisions the importance of the role of the social

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44 Decision on the comparability of vocational training qualifications between the Member States of the European Community of 3 July 1985, Official Journal No L199/56 of 31 July 1985

45 Corresponds to the level of skilled blue- or white-collar worker.

partners for the success of Community vocational training policy.

However, in many cases these rather general political expressions of opinion were not backed by any statements on the participation of the social partners in the implementation of the agreed programmes, etc. This is very clear in the case of the following resolutions:

- Programme on cooperation between universities and enterprises regarding training in the field of technology (COMETT),

- Vocational training measures in respect of the introduction of new information technologies,

- Vocational training policy in the European Community during the 1980s,

- Promotion of youth employment.

One exception here is the above-mentioned Council decision concerning the comparability of vocational training qualifications where explicit mention is made of close cooperation with the social partners both in the national coordination offices and in the working procedures of the Commission.

VII Special Developments in Various Sectors

The CEDEFOP commission for this report stipulates the special presentation of noteworthy developments in the various sectors. On the one hand, this means an overview of the structures and policies of employees' organizations in the various sectors with indications whether these sectors have a low, medium or high level of commitment. On the other hand, special developments in certain sectors and/or branches are to be identified.

1. The varying degrees of commitment in the different sectors

What applied to this section, can be said to apply to the overall investigation: The role of the social partners cannot be identified merely by describing the activities of employees' organizations. Such a description is only then valid if it is drawn up against the backdrop of the possible influences of employees' organizations on vocational training policy at EC level.

It would also be very problematic to look at trade union commitment and its effects from one angle only, that is according to the motto: the more active the trade unions are in the individual sectors, the more they influence vocational training policy at EC level, or, the greater the number of meetings and programmes, the greater the commitment. The reverse question is of importance, too, i.e. the question whether trade union commitment, including

the use of constantly limited finances and staff resources is really worth it. Do the areas under study have legal and institutional structures in which the role of the social partners could be implemented? Could such prerequisites be created through special commitment on the part of the employees' organizations in respect of vocational training.

The mere fact that the trade unions undertake special vocational training activities in the various sectors is no indication of the degree of importance which the trade unions attach to vocational training.

Thus, a catalogue of criteria to assess whether commitment is low, medium or high must be very broad. It must include the following questions:

- Does the employees' organization have its own specially approved vocational training policy on paper?

- Does the employees' organization have special vocational training bodies?

- Are there bodies which have been set up jointly with the employers (joint or mixed committees)?

- Are there vocational training institutions which are jointly financed by employees' and employers' organizations?

- Does the Commission have special responsibilities or institutions, e.g. a policy in the corresponding economic sector?

- Are there specific regulations for this area?

- Are there activities and programmes which go beyond the simple discussion of the subject of vocational training?

Against this background, it can be said that a great deal is happening in the trade union committees for agriculture (EFA) and building/wood (EFBW); little is happening in the metalworking sector (EMB) and more or less nothing is happening in the rest.

2. Present developments in selected sectors or branches

CEDEFOP selected for this section the same sectors and branches as were investigated in the national reports on the role of the social partners in vocational training. This may be one reason why there is little to report on here. But even in the sectors which were not selected, there are hardly any special features worthy of mention.

Construction

The only special development here are the joint efforts by the social partners to set up a European Information Centre for Vocational Training in the Construction Industry in Brussels.

Metalworking/Electronics

There are no special developments here.

Banking/Insurance

There are no special developments here.

Agriculture

One special development here is the European Training and Promotion Centre for Farming and Rural Life (CEPFAR) which is jointly sponsored by the European professional agricultural organizations, rural associations, the European Council of Young Farmers and the European Federation of Agricultural Trade Unions. Like the European Trade Union Institute, this organization also receives an EC subsidy.

VIII Summary, Estimates, Suggestions

The role assigned to the social partners by the organs and offices of the Community is rather ambivalent both in reality and in statements on this subject.

On the one hand, their influence is limited in many ways and willingness to let the social partners participate - both in terms of the prescribed involvement and of the free scope for such involvement - varies greatly.

On the other hand, there is evidence of a very favourable attitude towards their participation.

1. The present role of employees

1.1. Extensive participation in opinion-forming

Based on their membership of very varied advisory councils and on further activities in particular those of ETUC vis-à-vis the organs and offices of the Community, the trade unions are involved in opinion-forming and the preparation of decisions in almost all vocational training activities at Community level.

In the interviews and the evaluation of material for this report no examples could be found of decisions which went against the expressed desires of employees' representatives. On the other hand, it was equally clear that the role of trade unions scarcely went beyond

contributing to the forming of opinions and even this contribution varied in its effectiveness depending on the situation and institution involved. This constitutes a considerable difference from their role in vocational training in national contexts.

1.2 Community influence on the role of the social partners

1.2.1 Basically positive attitude towards involvement

In principle, the organs and offices of the EC have adopted a positive stance on a responsible and co-determining role for the social partners.

They support the social partners in their pursuit of this role in many ways, particularly by organizing and funding preliminary discussions, information and preparatory meetings at association level, etc.

It is to be expected that this attitude and the ensuing concrete assistance will be strengthened further by the Single European Act and the Val Duchesse dialogue.

1.2.2 Activation by CEDEFOP

It is very clear that many CEDEFOP activities, for example the preparatory work in connection with the Council decision on the comparability of training certificates, led to an intensification of the activities of the social partners or even sparked them off. Almost everywhere where

special activities could be observed, there was a close connection with CEDEFOP activities.

1.2.3. Limited Community opportunities impose a rigid framework on the role of the social partners

The possibilites for the organs and offices of the Community to influence vocational training in the Member States - and it is only there that vocational training takes place - imposes a rigid framework on the role of the social partners.

Even where they are fully integrated into opinion-forming processes and the preparation of decisions of the Commission and the Council, their real influence can only be limited.

1.2.4. Increased influence for the Community goes hand in hand with less influence for the social partners

The social partners can influence EC activities which have more the character of general opinions to a greater extent than they can measures and decisions with direct consequences for training activities in Member States.

Unlike the Member States the Community has no self-administrative institutions for vocational training or for social and labour market affairs which could guarantee the social partners direct influence and direct

responsibilities[46]. In other words, as long as the role of the social partners is limited mainly to opinion-forming and the preparation of regulations, their involvement will continue to be less permanent than if they were to assume administrative and decision-making duties. For, there are considerable lapses of time between new regulations and recommendations whereas implementation and self-administration are daily tasks.

1.2.5 No opportunities for involvement within the compass of the Ministers for Education

The Council of Ministers for Education, i.e. the Ministers for Education meeting within the Council have, in recent years, taken many decisions which affect vocational training either directly or indirectly.

During the preparation of these decisions, the social partners were not involved either through the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training or through the Economic and Social Committee.

1.3. Problems on the employees' side

1.3.1 Greater efforts are neccessary

If the trade unions are to utilize fully their opportunities for influence, to prepare meetings more

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46 CEDEFOP comes closest to such a model.

effectively, to harmonize their views, to take initiatives themselves and to elaborate well-founded opinions and proposals, they will need considerably more staff and material resources than they have at the moment.

The situation of employees' representatives differs from that of employers' representatives as the trade unions are, by necessity, more interested in active, effective Community vocational training policy than the employers. It is always more taxing to achieve progress through information and efforts to convince people than it is to prevent undesirable developments.

1.3.2 National interests often predominate in the attitudes of employees' representatives

As far as possible, trade union representatives in EC bodies orientate themselves towards common goals and programmes. However, their concrete position is determined mainly by current needs.

As in the past, major differences exist not just between the national systems and structures of vocational training but also between their levels of development. These differences in "practice" determine more than do common "European trade union objectives" the position of employees' representatives when it comes to concrete measures, for example the financial resources of the European Social Fund or model projects or decisions which affect Member States directly.

1.3.3 Well advanced development of common positions

Although national interests continue to prevail in many concrete decisions, in recent years more and more success has been recorded particularly in ETUC activities in elaborating a joint European opinion not only on major objectives but also on many important individual issues.

These attitudes are gaining increased access, often with the same wording, to the relevant decisions of trade union committees and other trade union confederations.

1.3.4 Only a few sectors have special vocational training activities.

Of course, vocational training issues are important and are dealt with in almost all trade union activities.

However, a specific vocational training policy or targeted activities are only to be found in a few branches, for example in agriculture and in the construction industry.

1.3.5 Trade unions cannot exhaust all opportunities for participation

With their present manpower and material resources - and this is by no means a short-term problem - the trade unions are not in a position to grasp all the opportunities for participation in policy-shaping provided for in EC regulations.

The individual trade union committees are as a rule "one-man shows" and even the staff level of ETUC and its organization is very small.

1.4 General observations

1.4.1 The earlier, the more effective

In formal terms, the social partners have the most influence where they have concrete rights to make their views heard, etc.

In reality, however, the earlier the social partners are involved in the development of policies, the greater their opportunities to influence them. Viewed in this way, the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training offers a greater number of opportunities than other legally more important bodies which only become involved once the opinion-forming process is far advanced.

1.4.2 A more effective role for the social partners

Many "long-serving" representatives of the social partners in EC bodies believe that the influence of these bodies, in particular that of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, was much greater in the past. This cannot, however, be proved.

We should perhaps ask ourselves whether this impression has arisen because new bodies nearly always take up almost all

the issues which belong to their area of responsibility and want to work on them. This is often the pattern when people enter new territory but then increasingly recognize the limits to their possibilities and have to rethink.

It would seem that the opportunities for the social partners to use their influence are organized in a much more effective manner today than was the case in the early years. This applies both to the institutional side, i.e. to the activities which stem from the Commission and also to the organizations on the employees' side.

2. Answers to the key questions

By way of summary the questions posed in the introduction concerning the role of the social partners in relation to the employees' side could be answered as follows:

2.1 The influence of the social partners as guaranteed to them by legal and institutional regulations is limited almost exclusively to consultations in the opinion-forming phase. They have scarcely any co-decision-making or self-administrative rights. In the administration of Community financial programmes, they are - with the limited exception of the Social Fund - excluded from the Community level.

2.2 The tasks and opportunities of the Community and/or of its organs and institutions and, by extension, the basis for the influence of the social partners are very

restricted by Community legislation and by the actual situation in the Community.

2.3 The employees and their organizations are striving not only to use the given opportunities for influence but also to extend them in qualitative and quantitative terms. Their aim is to achieve greater involvement within the possibilities offered by Community organs and institutions and to expand on these. They want to exercise more influence on Community vocational training policy.

However, their actual influence is limited in two ways. On the one hand, it is limited by the boundaries imposed on the Community itself and, on the other, by the absolutely inadequate financial and personnel resources of trade union organizations at European level.

2.4 Effective cooperation between the social partners at European level is only to be found in rare cases. The classic forms of cooperation in particular agreements, contracts and joint institutions, are more or less non-existent to date.

2.5 Finally, it would appear that most of those concerned see the role of the social partners as one of influencing the policy of the organs and offices of the Community rather than as an opportunity for the trade

unions to implement a common vocational training policy in the Member States.

3. Reflections on how to increase the responsibility and influence of the social partners

The European trade union organizations do indeed recognize that important improvements could be made to their carrying out this role, not only through the creation of further bodies or the extension of the rights of the social partners but also through "back-up" from the Commission. They do, however, voice criticism, too.

As in the past, some of their criticism is directed at the unsatisfactory preparation of meetings, inadequate and late provision of information, etc. However, on the whole it is not so much their lack of opportunities to influence the Council and Commission which they criticise but rather the absence of any or almost any activities on the part of the Community.

Thus, the records and opinions of the advisory bodies usually indicate considerable agreement on the part of the social partners with the vocational training activities of the Community. But they want much more. This definitely applies to the employees' side. If this is not always stated very clearly, then this is because the bodies in some cases have settled for "framework conditions".

Generally speaking, the studies showed very clearly that the boundaries to the role of the social partners are only partly to be found in the inadequate use of the given opportunities. In spite of this, steps in this direction could bring improvement.

Beyond that, only a structural change in the legal and institutional conditions and the policy of the Community could strengthen the role of the social partners in line with the wishes of the employees.

Whether and to what extent this is possible was not the subject of this study. This report would fail in its task, however, if it did not at least indicate that this problem exists.

3.1 Improvements within the given framework

3.1.1 More material assistance for the trade unions

While not wishing to play down the material support of the Community for the social partners, in particular for the trade unions, the question arises whether it is enough, given the importance which the Community attaches to the role of the social partners.

With additional financial, personnel and material assistance for projects of the social partners, it could considerably increase its commitment to vocational training. This applies both to the setting up and

maintenance costs of certain institutions (for example, the information centre for the construction industry) and to the possibility of arranging further meetings between the social partners and with the offices of the Commission.

3.2 Further structural developments

Structural improvements in the role of the social partners do not necessarily mean changes in the legal foundations. They could also be achieved through changes in the practical policy of the Community.

3.2.1 Self-administration in vocational training

In many Member States, responsibility for the administration of major vocational training tasks has been transferred to the social partners. The only similar example which can be quoted at EC level is CEDEFOP.

Other vocational training tasks, as long as they are administrative in nature, have been retained by the organs of the Community. The question is whether it would not be possible and helpful to transfer the vocational training resources of Community financing instruments to a "European self-administration".

Even the transfer of other less important tasks such as pilot projects, demonstration projects, exchange programmes to a self-administrative body could contribute to intensifying the role of the social partners.

3.2.2 Improved participation of the social partners in the implementation of Community policy in the Member States

If one of the accepted goals of Community policy is to promote the social dialogue and to increase the responsibility of the social partners, then the question naturally arises whether the Commission and the Council could do more to ensure that this could also be supported through the "obligatory integration" of the social partners into the implementation of projects financed by the Community.

3.2.3 More rights for the social partners

It would also be worth considering whether more rights should be granted to the social partners and/or the various bodies. It would certainly strengthen the role of the social partners if they were to be allowed not only to discuss project objectives and project developments but could also be involved in decisions. Legal arguments should not, however, be allowed to completely block such a development because in the Member States, too, ways could be found, against a similar legal backdrop, of enabling the social partners to participate in decisions.

Annex

List of abbreviations and trade union organizations at EC level

Abbreviations

BIAC	Business and Industry Advisory Committee to OECD
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CEEP	European Centre of Public Enterprises
CEPFAR	European Training and Promotion Centre for Farming and Rural Life
EAGGF	European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund
EC	European Community
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ELC	Employers' Liaison Committee
ESF	European Social Fund
EURATOM	European Atomic Energy Community
EURYDICE	Education Information Network in the European Community
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMP	Integrated Mediterranean Programmes
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
TUAC	Trade Union Advisory Committee to OECD
UNICE	Union of Industries of the European Community

Trade Union Organizations

Committee of Transport Workers' Unions in the European Community
Gewerkschaftlicher Verkehrsausschuß in der Europäischen Gemeinschaft
Comité Syndical des Transports dans la Communauté Européenne
25 Puttery, Brussels

ECF-IUF
European Committee of Food, Catering and Allied Workers' Unions within the IUF (ECF-IUF)
EAL-IUL
Europäischer Ausschuß der Lebens-, Genußmmittel und Gastgewerbegewerkschaften in der IUL (EAL-IUL)
SETA-UITA
Syndicat Européen des Travailleurs d'Alimentation, de l'Hotellerie et des Branches Connexes dans l'UITA (SETA-UITA)
Bulding 3, 38 rue Fossé aux Loups, Brussels

EFA
European Federation of Agricultural Workers' Unions within the Community
Europäische Föderation der Agrarischen Gewerkschaften in der Gemeinschaft
Fédération Européenne des Syndicats de Travailleurs Agricoles dans la Communauté
Building 8, 38 rue Fossé aux Loups, Brussels

EFBW
European Federation of Building and Woodworkers
EFBH
Europäische Föderation der Bau- und Holzarbeiter
FETBB
Fédération Européenne des Travailleurs du batiment et du bois
Building 4, 28a rue Fossé aux Loups, Brussels

EGAKU
European Committee of Trade Unions in Arts, Mass Media and Entertainment
Europäischer Gewerkschaftsausschuß für Kunst und Unterhaltung
Comité Européen des Syndicats des Arts, Spectacles, de la Presse et de l'Audiovisuel
19 Klarastr., Munich 19

EGTBL
European Trade Union Committee: Textiles, Clothing and Leather
Europäischer Gewerkschaftsausschuß Textil, Bekleidung und Leder
Comité Syndical Européen - Textile, Habillement et Cuir
8 rue Joseph Stevens, Brussels

EMF
European Metalworkers' Federation in the Community
EMB
Europäischer Metallgewerkschaftsbund in der Gemeinschaft
FEM
Fédération Européenne des Métallurgistes dans la Communauté
Building 4, 38 rue Fossé aux Loups, Brussels

ETTUC
European Teachers' Trade Union Committee
EGKL
Europäisches Gewerkschaftskomitee der Lehrer
CSEE
Comité Syndical Européen des Personnels de l'Education
33 rue de Trèves, Brussels

ETUC
European Trade Union Confederation
EGB
Europäischer Gewerkschaftsbund
CES
Confédération Européenne des Syndicats
37 rue Montagne aux Herbes Potagères, Brussels

ETUI
European Trade Union Institute
EGI
Europäisches Gewerkschaftsinstitut
ISE
Institut Syndical Européen
Building 4, 66 Boulevard de l'Impératrice, Brussels

EURODEFOP
European Federation of Employees in Public Services
Europäische Föderation der Öffentlich Bediensteten
Fédération Européenne du Personnel des Services Publics
33 rue de Trèves, Brussels

EURO-FIET
European Regional Organization of the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, Professional and Technical Employees
Europäische Regionalorganisation des internationalen Bundes der Privatangestellten
Organisation Régionale Européenne de la Fédération International des Employés, des Techniciens et des Cadres
Brussels office, 8 rue Joseph Stevens

IPTT
Postal, Telegraph and Telephone International - European Committee
Internationale des Personals der Post-, Telegraphien- und Telefonbetriebe - Europa-Ausschuß
Internationale du Personnel des Postes, Télégraphes et Téléphones - Comité Européen
36 avenue de Lignon, Geneva

PSI
European Public Services Industry Committee
CSP
Comité Syndical Européen des Services Publics
EUROPEIE
Europäischer Gewerkschaftsauschuß für den Öffentlichen Dienst
Maison des Huit-Heures, 9/11 Place Fontaine, Brussels

CEDEFOP — European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Employees' organizations and their contribution to the development of vocational training policy in the European Community

Horst Lemke

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